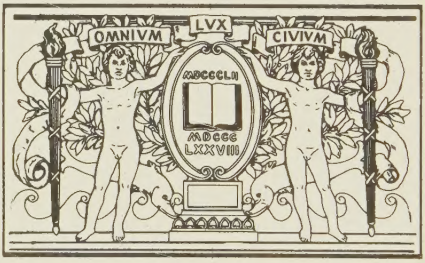

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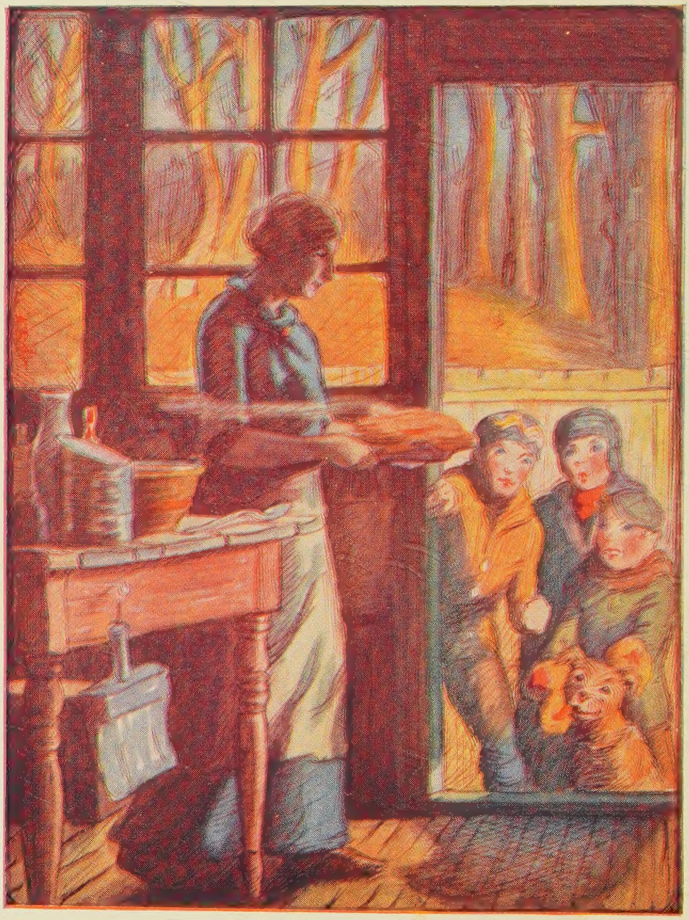

Herself and the Houseful

Being the middling-mirthful story of a middle-class American family of more than middle size

By

T. A. DALY

Illustrated by

JOHN DALY

New York

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DEDICATION AND FOREWORD

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED, SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE,
TO
M. H. McL.
AND
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

The accompanying letter of explanation—apology, argument, or what you will—is addressed directly to Mr. Morley, but the reader who insists upon a preface is invited to look over the author's shoulder while he writes:

DEAR KIT:

I have not asked your permission to dedicate these homely chapters to you, for you could scarcely deny me that privilege. They are, as you know, the elaboration of a brief paper which appeared, several years ago, in the *American Magazine*, bearing the title "The Fun of a Large Family"; and you must know, also, that this extension of that short sketch would never have been written but for your constant urging. Neither of us, my dear kinsprit, will deny that there is a vast deal of fun in a large family; but the raising of it—ah! who would pretend it is all beer and skittles?

Let us be quite frank about it, preferring to err, if at all, as the Publican rather than the Pharisee. In this venture—speaking of Publicans in the bibulous, not the biblical sense—I may be said to have deliberately set myself up as one of those gentry, conducting as a sort

of public house what was once, and perhaps still should be, a private home. My motives may be no more worthy than those of other bonifaces before me—the furnishing (for a consideration) of entertainment, or comfort, or both, to travelers along the road. Still, since the die is cast, I may at least see to it that within these walls (or covers) shall be observed those basic decencies which maintained in other properly conducted public houses in the days before temperance became a sin.

The rules, which you will not be ashamed to admit you remember, were two: "Political and Religious Discussions and Profane Language Positively Forbidden" and "No Strong Drink Sold to Minors." That these have been my guiding Gemini, you will discover upon reading this book, dedicated, without permission to you and to M. H. McL. Of your co-partner in this dedication, too, I expect forgiveness. He is always indulgent and tolerant of my impertinences, and I owe him more affection than I can ever repay. I could wish I had had the courage to extend his initials into his full and honored name. But I know he would have winced at the publicity. All the McLanahans are that way.

Ah! well, Kit, I know both you and he will continue kind to "Herself and the Houseful," whatever may be your judgment upon

Yours affectionately,

T. A. Daly.

Philadelphia,
May, 1924.

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CHAPTER I

The Anonymous Bridegroom

Thackeray, in "The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon, Esq.," makes his boastful Irish hero bounce upon the stage with this opening speech: "Since the days of Adam, there has been hardly a mischief done in this world but a woman has been at the bottom of it. Ever since ours was a family . . . women have played a mighty part with the destinies of our race."

Now this is a different tale. For here is the

story of a family in which one woman has played a mighty part, and but little mischief except what was innocent and wholesome. The reader —if such there be—who follows to the last chapter these "short and simple annals of the poor," will not be deceived upon this point by the writer's frequent reversions to type, the type of Barry Lyndon, whose racial strain he shares. The writer himself is under no delusion about it. However much he may indulge, in these pages, the inclination to push himself forward, he knows his place. Indeed, his comparative unimportance was impressed upon him from the start.

One of Philadelphia's leading morning papers, in its issue of June 25, 1896, published this all-too-brief notice:

A QUIET HOME WEDDING

Last evening at the residence of the bride's parents, 1803 South 15th Street, Miss Nannie Barrett, daughter of Captain and Mrs. Leonard D. Barrett, was married, in the presence of immediate relatives and a few friends only. Rev.

> Francis Hamilton officiated. The bride, who is pretty and accomplished, wore a simple gown of white nainsook and carried a shower bouquet of sweet peas and lilies of the valley. After an extended wedding tour the young couple will be at home on September 1, at 2209 Spring Garden Street.

The unmentionable bridegroom! But what did it matter? He was not pretty, nor had he accomplished anything, except that he had won, as many another before and since, a mate who was too good for him. The less said about him the better. And yet, since this chronicle is, after all, but a snapping up of "unconsidered trifles," some attention must be given to this one. He was rather below medium height and thin—wiry, perhaps, is a better word—and he had a tough walk. His eyes and mouth were large and his ears something more than that. His complexion was swarthy and he seemed perpetually in need of a shave; most of the time, indeed, he actually was in such need. But why linger upon this picture? Rude strangers meeting Nannie Barrett-that-was, then—and upon

frequent occasions since, for that matter—invariably inquired why she had ever lingered upon it at all. The good woman has never been able to give an explanation satisfactory to any one but herself. This is her best effort: "Well, there were tones in his voice that were engaging, and he talked rather well."

Perhaps there is some truth in this; at any rate, the young man himself believed it, and was unduly vain of it. It would have become him better if he had been less proud of his trick of smart speech and considerably more careful of his personal appearance and habits. But the one came easily to him and the other would have entailed effort, and it may as well be confessed that he has always been—if not downright lazy—at least lackadaisical. In those early days, following a college education distinguished, if at all, by nothing more creditable or substantial than batting and fielding *summa cum laude*—in those days, we say, when he was a cub reporter on the—well, it was the pioneer penny paper of the United States, so we'll call

it that—talk was cheap; and other things such as shaves and hair-cuts, called for money. The safety razor had not yet been invented, and the barber's slightest service cost at least 15 cents; and in those good old times, it was possible for one possessed of 15 cents to buy something much more delectable than a shave.

Just around the corner from the *Pioneer* office there was a decent light lunch café where the food was cheap and good. Here, one day, when the callow fellow was regaling himself to the limit of his purse, there entered a small messenger-boy. Sliding into a seat at the counter beside the smart young journalist, the newcomer laid down a nickel and called for "a hunk of apple pie." It was served to him garnished with a neat little geometric square of cheese, such as they were accustomed to give with apple pie in those generous days. Now the boy was evidently new to the great world of business and unaccustomed to the ways of swell restaurants. The cheese bothered him. So pointing one grimy finger at it, and nudging

his sophisticated neighbor in the ribs, he demanded: "Hey! bo, w'at's 'at?" "That," replied the bright youth, quick as a flash, "why, that's a piece of soap to wash your hands with." Deliberately and calmly the little lad examined first the cheese and then the self-satisfied face of his neighbor. Picking up the cheese he laid it beside the other's plate and said: "You take it an' go git a shave."

Setbacks like that were good for the bright youth. They were excellent educational helps, which taught him that it was sometimes unwise to be too smart; and it would have been well for him if they had come oftener—say, like other good medicine, "every two hours until relieved." There is a form of impudence which is particularly hard to cure because the patient himself persists in diagnosing it as originality. This youth was so afflicted. Once—at the outset of his career, when he was a clerk in the publication office of the *Pioneer*—he convinced himself that he was entitled to a raise in pay. It was the habit of the other clerks in that office,

when similarly moved, to consult The Complete Letter-Writer. But not our youth. He addressed the boss thus: "I have an idea that I am worth more to the *Pioneer* than six dollars a week. Has that idea ever struck you?"

Next morning he was called to the front and his letter was handed back to him. This abashed him, until he read at the bottom of the sheet in the boss's hand: "It's a good idea and worth $1 a week." The youth was then so pleased with himself that he proudly showed the complete correspondence to his brother-clerks. A few days later he was called to the front again. "Evidently you showed your letter to somebody; read this," said the boss, handing him another which ran: "Dear sir: I have an idea that I am worth more to the *Pioneer* than $6 a week. Has that idea ever struck you? Respectfully, Morris H. Bird." "That idea," said the boss, "is like lightning. It doesn't strike twice in the same place."

As it turned out, the idea was not much good even that once. Although it might have

cost that department of the newspaper $52 a year, the actual damage amounted to no more than $5, for within a month the recipient of the favor was in disfavor for some impertinent act of insubordination. In other words, he was on the point of being permitted to resign. He managed, with the eager assistance of his late boss, to find a berth among the reporters, where, if his services were not more valuable, his peculiar temperament, it was hoped, would at least be less hurtful to the paper.

Reporters, in the 90's, were a brash lot. It was rather expected of them, and many lived up to expectations. The nose for news that happened also to be red was no longer considered the badge of genius, as it had been a decade or so before that, but there was much less discipline in the ranks than is now enforced. Perhaps, too, there was more hard work; and the workers, as a rule, were loyal and well-behaved when the honor and the interests of the paper were at stake. But the glamor and gayety of the game unfitted for domestic re-

sponsibilities and the serious business of money-making many a youngster who stayed too long in it. Let it not be supposed that all these bright young men of the press were unprincipled wastrels. Except that their temptations may have been greater, they were much like their contemporaries in other professions, much like the general run of male humanity in (and of) all ages—ordinarily sane in their thoughts and impulses, but often weak or dilatory in performance.

The dreamer with whom this story deals was 25 years old before he did anything really worth while; and although this was the wisest thing he ever did, the credit for it is not all his, for he had to be urged to the doing of it. For nearly half a dozen years he had known the one woman who was for him the rose of the world. He had lost no time in telling her so, and on an average of twice a week ever since he had continued to tell her so; but that was as far as he got. Then one day his Juno launched a bolt from the blue—from the blue

of her flashing eyes—and he decided at once to mend his ways. With his next week's wages, and a loan from a friend, he bought a modest engagement ring; and when this was slipped upon the lady's finger the date was fixed for the next and more important ring ceremony.

The writer begs the reader's pardon for his assumption of the rôle of the "gray-beard loon" —the "Ancient Marrier," one might say—who holds up the wedding guest to prate of times past when he was a bachelor blade. Still the digression was necessary, to furnish at least the outlines of "a portrait of the artist as a young man," that the reader might have some notion of the magnitude of the task undertaken by the bride on June 24, 1896, and better appreciate the measure of her accomplishment to date. So we come back to the beginning of things, the quiet home wedding.

. . . . . .

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is She;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

Rosy-red brides may have been fashionable in the Eighteenth Century, or that earlier period of ancient mariners armed with cross-bows with which Coleridge's famous poem deals, but not at the close of the Nineteenth. Sweet as the rose, was this bride, but not so flamboyant. Her coloring was rather cream-white. Beautiful she was, of course, as all brides are, but she has grown lovelier since. This is not maudlin gush, but the simple truth. Yet, as this chronicle aims to be wholly frank, it must be admitted that the bride was not always, or even usually, so winsomely pretty as she was upon her wedding night. She had the stature and the carriage of a goddess, but it was Galatea before the miracle, a dormant divinity. Her countenance was habitually too serious; a trait unaccountable in a woman blessed with teeth that were, and still are, superb. No, decidedly, she was not pretty—then. Why, she admitted it herself; though it probably hurt her to find her blundering lover so prompt to agree with her. But he meant well, and he made amends. He had

written verses before he met her, but they had been mere academic echoes, with no hint of soul in them. She was the first to kindle the divine fire in him—a tiny flame, to be sure, but clear and pure. Her speech of modest self-depreciation so haunted and impressed him that he composed upon it, and in one stanza glimmered the true spark:

> Wert thou as fair as thou art good,
> It were not given to any man,
> With daring eyes of flesh and blood,
> To look thee in the face and scan
> The splendor of thy womanhood.

But in its description of her as a bride, the otherwise inadequate wedding-notice was right; She *was* pretty. And a line or two of praise might have been lavished upon the groom. He was, for once, well-groomed. His new $25 full-dress suit became him; and so did the air of unwonted seriousness he wore. There was, indeed, a reason for his pallor and his grave looks. Except for the gifts laid out in an upper room—including the duplicate pickle-jars which always

bobbed up at weddings in the early 90's—and a couple of hundred dollars in checks, which, it was hoped would be negotiable and transmutable into cold cash after the "extended wedding tour," all the wealth he had in the world was $69, representing three weeks' salary in advance. Oh, yes, of course, there were railroad passes, otherwise that tour would not have extended to Niagara Falls, nor beyond the first week, as it did. But $69 was all the cash he had.

Why, you say, this fellow was no hero, but a fool! Well, as Bernard Shaw makes *his* hero in "The Devil's Disciple" remark, "it amounts to the same thing." Certainly the average young man in love invariably proves himself one of those things if not always the other; and this, it must be remembered, was only an average young man. Or was he? He was rash, with that indifference to what the morrow may bring which is common to healthy youth, but he would never admit he was "average"; no man ever does. But, one may ask,

what of the young woman, who has been described as so much above the common; what could she have been thinking of to embark upon this sea in such a flimsy boat and with such an irresponsible navigator? Not so fast! Whatever may have been said of her, by way of praise —that she was semi-occasionally pretty, that she had the aspect of a goddess yet to be awakened—it has not been claimed for her that she was wise, but only that she habitually wore a serious look, which is not by any means the same thing. In this first chapter she was adorably foolish; otherwise she would never have embarked and there would be no other chapters to write. But, having taken the step, she immediately—perhaps instinctively, for was she not a sailor's daughter?—entered upon the business of saving not only the flimsy boat but the irresponsible navigator and herself as well.

So they sailed away. For three weeks they voyaged upon a summer sea. The Lord tempered his winds to them, there were no cross-

currents, the provisions held out, and they came eventually without mishap up from the sea (and down from the clouds) and, resting their feet again upon the solid earth, began to face the serious business of continuing the partnership and of proving their patriotism. At this point the metaphor changes. It is no longer the sides of a ship, but the four walls of a house that are to bound their activities; so here the first chapter should end and the second begin. But before we come to that material menage, which, whether it be one room or a score, is called "Home," something must be said of another "house" already set in order by the heroine of this simple tale—the shabby "house" in which she had found lodgment some years before its original owner (careless and unworthy fellow!) had bestirred himself to provide a better. So subtly had she done her beneficent work there, so unconsciously to herself and to him, that her wedding ring was more than ten years old before he paid this belated but earnest tribute:

TO A TENANT

You found this house, dear lady, overrun
With noisome things that wait upon decay,
All pent within it moldering in the gray,
Sick gloom of long disuse whose webs were spun
Through all its halls. You entered, and, the sun
And God's air coming with you, swept away
All ugliness and squalor, on that day
When first your life-long leasehold was begun.

You tell me now your house, this heart of mine,
Is warm and ever-beautiful and fair,
And call me benefactor, nor divine
How little debt you owe, how much I bear
To you who made this shabby place a shrine
On that sweet day when first you entered there.

CHAPTER II

False Starts and Flounderings

"I'm so glad I managed it—"

"You are what?"

"I say, my dear, I'm so glad I managed to make our money hold out—"

"But you didn't."

He looked at her in amazement; and she, in turn, stared him out of countenance. The train had dropped them at the home station a few minutes before and they were now seated in a street car on their way to the Spring Garden

Street house—his bachelor barracks—where they were to have his old room.

"But, my dear lady, I tell you I did manage it; we still have four dollars and—"

She turned upon him almost furiously. That "my dear lady" was, then and ever after, more than she could stand.

"*You* didn't manage anything," she snapped. "If I hadn't rescued you from that wheedling curio-dealer at Niagara, who was just wrapping up all those souvenirs for you—$10 worth, at least—where would we be now? And just a minute ago you wanted to take a hansom-cab without ever asking or considering the price. I declare! it will not do; it simply will not do at all!"

Here was the first cloud, no bigger than a blundering man's hand, to darken the honeymoon. It was, unfortunately, not to be the last. Money—the wasting, or the lack of it—was to be at bottom of most of the atmospheric disturbances in the neighborhood of the new hearth. But as yet there was not even a hearth

they could call their own. Where they were going at that moment it was necessary to dissemble, so the discussion was postponed—to be resumed at midnight, and at numberless sessions for years and years after, where it was always "unfinished business."

But on that bright July morning the order was new business. Standing upon those white marble steps (which the good housewives of Philadelphia in the Nineteenth Century were said to anoint daily with chalk and orris root) they composed their faces and were smiling bridally when Maggie opened the door. Dear, simple, ancient girl!—they were never "maids" in those days; at least not in middle-class families—how she twittered and giggled as she led the way into the dark parlor, with its heavy furniture (including the square piano) shrouded in linen slips, its cheese-cloth'd pictures, the wax fruit under glass on the marble mantel and the Rogers group ("Weighing the Baby") on the onyx side-table. And while she unbarred one of the heavy shutters just a little—to let in a

modicum of light, but not the destructive sunshine—how she hurried to be first to tell all the news about the Cat and Uncle John's rheumatism and the fire in the market-house across the street and everything, for the stately step of her mistress was already upon the stair.

How queenly and truly mid-Victorian dear old Aunt Sarah was in her corded silk gown, and how sweet and gracious; and the young benedict's sisters, who followed in her wake, how effusively affectionate they were, too. What a merry meal that early luncheon was, and what constant solicitude everybody showed for the health and comfort of the bride. It was such a whole-hearted display of amity, such a joyous haling home of the bride, that the young man, sallying forth to the office shortly thereafter to take up again his work of news-gathering, felt the world was his for the taking. They would be quite happy in the old home, he thought, for, say, six months, a year—as long as they cared to stay. But he was wrong. Though a man's cousins and his sisters and his aunts be perfect

angels—as, of course, they invariably are—it is difficult for them to tolerate a strange perfect angel in their midst. It is nothing to anybody's discredit; it is mere incompatibility of temperament. Scarcely a month had passed when there came to the nest up under the roof a sleepless night, sprinkled with tears which were real, but only vaguely explainable; and before dawn new plans were made, and these, a few mornings later, were announced at the breakfast table.

The youth on this occasion behaved almost like a senator, a doctor of diplomacy. There was no friction, the feelings of no one were hurt, but it was explained that a room had been found in a respectable boarding house which had the advantage of being near the husband's office and the bride's own home-folks; and besides they would soon have to be looking about for a house of their own, etc.

"But, oh, Maggie," said he, to the simple-minded old servitor, who was seldom beyond earshot of any family council, "we certainly are going to miss your cooking."

"Maybe *you* will," replied Maggie, "but She ain't been enjoyin' her breakfasts much the last coupla mornin's. I noticed yesterday—"

"Ah, yes," he interrupted, hastily, "breakfast is sometimes a trying meal."

"Do you remember, Aunt Sarah," he continued, turning to the dear old Duchess behind the coffee urn, "the first time I brought a chum home to spend the night with me? We came in after midnight, but you heard us and you had an extra fine breakfast spread for us in the morning. At table I made the mistake of remarking that the coffee looked weak, and Maggie said: 'That coffee ain't weak; it's got cream in it—you ain't used to cream.' "

"Well, so it did have cream in it," piped Maggie's voice through the general laughter.

The new boarding-house ("new" only in a personal sense to them) was one of many such caverns of cold comfort in a solid row of once fashionable residences along the southern selvage of the central business section. It was near enough to the husband's office to permit him to

take three meals a day there, such as they were. That was the only advantage—that and the fact that board and lodging for two cost only $12 a week. They were not unhappy there, certainly not so unhappy as the other inmates, seen only on the stairs or in the dining-room, looked to them. Anyway, they knew that escape was at hand. It was not to be a "green escape," unfortunately, but it was to be pleasant, for all that. They spent their spare daylight hours together searching for it, and by September first they found it—a new two-story house far downtown—and entered into possession of it, after the pious mother of the bride had first carried into it the traditional salt and Bible. The checks among the bridal gifts, proving to be good, were exchanged for needed furnishings, mostly below stairs, where they would show, and the big business of life was begun.

Little is remembered now of that fall and winter. It could not help but be a trying time, a formative period for both. Then, if ever, come those nice adjustments of individual habits of

thought and action, that mutual mingling of helpfulness and tolerance, that "give and take," without which it is impossible to make newly-mated heartstrings emit music at all approaching the grand symphony. It was a season for the sinking of all selfishness, and there were faults for both to correct, although those on the distaff side were few and tiny. The man behaved surprisingly well. There would have been no poetry in his soul if he had not, and he rather fancied himself a poet. How the young wives of night-workers manage to survive the tedium and terror of long hours alone in the house only their guardian angels, perhaps, can tell. The young man's imagination kept a picture before him which drove him home promptly when his day closed, usually long after midnight.

Under spur of what was impending, he looked about for extra work to eke out the paltry wage that was then, as now, the lot of the average worker in journalism. He even managed to put a few dollars by, which was something he had

never done as a bachelor. And how far a dollar could be made to go in those days! Rent for the comfortable little house was only $18 a month. And how tiny was the tax the various tradesmen put upon the table! Milk was only six cents a quart in summer, and eight in winter. For 12 cents one could buy a pound of the best pork chops, which, with a small can of tomatoes, at, say, eight cents, and a couple of mealy, baked potatoes, a few pennies' worth, made an ample meal for two. Other creature comforts were proportionately cheap; and some luxuries were even free, theatrical and operatic performances, for instance, and symphony concerts. So the first winter went by on rosy wings.

In the gusty dark of a morning in Spring—let it be said, for the benefit of those who are quick at computing upon their fingers, it was the last day of March—the young man set out hurriedly from home upon an urgent mission. Only the rich had house-telephones in those days, and when one citizen felt a keen desire to speak with

another, especially at so early an hour in the morning, it was necessary to go to him in person. About an hour later, as the dawn was breaking, the youth returned to his own door, accompanied by an elderly gentleman who wore chin whiskers and a professional air, and who was a very old friend of the young man's wife. Indeed, he had been the first person in the world to make her acquaintance. He was now ushered at once into her presence. Later he sat at table and drank a cup of coffee in the most matter-of-fact way. The young man marveled at this old gentleman's perfect placidity. He quite resented it, in fact, a few moments later when the ancient took his hat and departed, promising to return at noon.

It was a long, soul-racking day, but with its close came the real beginning of the family. The first junior partner in the new firm was named Leonard, for his maternal grandfather. For many months he was little more than a sleeping partner—when he was not eating. He practised both those avocations, the active and

passive, to excess, but neither of them added one jot to the firm's "overhead." The maternal bosom afforded him bed and board. Here again the benefices of the rule of "give and take," the law of compensation, were made manifest. The maiden who had been a shade too pale and slender became a matron who was rosy and whose weight (Helen of Troy weight, of course) was—well, her husband began calling her "Dot," "Fay" and such like (shall we say?) "matronymics." The frivolous father, though still an incorrigible jester, had experienced an access of seriousness in proportion as his mate's stock of it had been tinctured with gaiety. "Give and take" again!

So, with the return of summer, the new firm, which was to specialize in a complete miscellaneous domestic line (American) of duties, happiness, cares—yes and little dissensions—was at least started upon its way. The establishment's first location had been selected by the partners mainly because of its proximity to that other house in which their partnership had first

been broached, discussed and finally confirmed, and where the bride's parents still resided. For a time the original quarters were entirely adequate, but as the firm prospered and grew it moved to a larger house, and again to another still more commodious. Each of these removals brought the young firm nearer and nearer to the old folks—and, as it turned out, to trouble.

. . . . .

Since the bride was now a six years' matron it is well to confer upon her a new and more apt title. She will be known variously hereafter in this chronicle as the "General Manager" and "Herself." And for her mate the appellation that would seem as good as any other is The Super; for "super," as everybody knows, is an abbreviation for "superintendent" as well as for "supernumerary"; and at various times both these words described the man's relation to the household. In their attitude toward the crisis that was at hand in this sixth year of the firm's

existence, the General Manager and the Super were in perfect accord. The firm was now a close corporation of five, two more junior partners, John and Tom, having arrived in the order named. It was through these three cadets that serious blows were being struck at the discipline, the morale of the house. Two venerable neighbors, known to the cadets as "Bompom" and "Bommom," were the offenders. Although they meant well and were a loving and otherwise altogether lovable couple, they were in one respect much too gentle and generous. They insisted upon lavishing taffy upon those juniors when what was most needed was the stick. Proper discipline was impossible while the new and struggling enterprise was domiciled within the benevolent shadow of the elder one. It was decided, after several executive conferences, that there must be another remove, and that this time it should take the firm beyond the daily influence of the old folks.

It was a hard ruling, perhaps, but for the

reason mentioned it had become necessary; and there were other considerations to prompt it, and it was these only that were openly assigned as the compelling cause of flight, that the kindly seniors might not be needlessly offended. The neighborhood, they were told, was by no means the best suited to the business in hand. Heavy trolley cars, constantly passing, menaced young lives and tender limbs. Flat wheels bumping and pounding and loud gongs clanging past the door, all through the night, disturbed refreshing slumber, etc., etc. It was certainly not the ideal environment for growing children. So the grandparents reluctantly agreed that what must be must be.

So far, so good; but there was still a delicate task to be performed, and for its accomplishment the Super was compelled again to draw upon his small store of diplomacy. He had to deal in this case with a prejudiced partner whose opinion in most instances was the supreme law. He had, by this time, partially learned an important truth, the full flash of which was not to burst

upon him until several years later. And the coming of that light was in this wise:

It was in the early fall of 1910, on the occasion of what he has always since referred to as "the lawst time I was abroad," he was traveling from Dublin to Rosslare, along the southeastern coast of Ireland. About midway of the journey the train stopped at a little station. Waiting on the platform was a bridal party of three—a sweet-faced, modest, and capable-looking bride, a bumptious self-satisfied bridegroom, and a gentle, white-haired old man, who seemed to be the father of the groom. The ancient was remonstrating with the younger man.

"Now, Barney," said he, "let Mary have a word to say now an' ag'in. She has a mind of her own, an'—"

Barney stopped him with a grand gesture and announced to all the world within hearing that "The man's the man."

The old father shook his head; and there was wisdom in the smile he turned upon Mary, as he helped her into the second-class coach. Barney

followed with the luggage and the train puffed on its way, leaving the old man waving fare-ye-wells from the platform. The Super—the traveler from America—saw no more of any of them, but later he had talk with a gossip in his compartment, who claimed to be a crony of the ancient, and, from what was told him, he built up a picture of the old man, returning to his lonely fireside and soliloquizing in this fashion:

THE MAN'S THE MAN

"The man's the man!" my Barney says—
  An' Barney's newly married—
"He's the wan that knows the ways
  The burdens should be carried.
Let the woman wear the grace
  An' pleasin' pranks o' beauty,
Yet be mindful of her place
  An' of her wifely duty;
By the crown within my hat,
  The chief of all our riches,
I'll be king o' this an' that;
  An' sure I'll wear the breeches;
Yes, an' need be, I can teach
  The Spanish way o' walkin'!"
There's my Barney's manful speech—
  I listen to him talkin'.

"The man's the man!" my Barney says,
  An', faith, my thoughts are carried
Back to well-remembered days,
  When I was newly married;
An' there's wan, that's looking down
  Upon this house this minute,
Knows who was it wore the crown
  The while herself was in it.
Dull I was, but plain as day
  'Tis now I'm seein' through it,
How she let me have *her* way,
  An', sure, I never knew it;
Puffed wid pride as I could be,
  An' struttin' 'round an' squawkin',
"Man's the man!" sez I, an' she—
  She listened to me talkin'.

CHAPTER III

The Green Escape

Although it had been agreed between the General Manager and the Super that a new house must be found in a distant and more quiet neighborhood, no definite location had been selected, or even discussed. Herself was "city-born and raised." The country seemed to her delightful for an occasional picnic or even a two-weeks' vacation, but the thought of it as a place of permanent abode terrified her. She was quite sure she could never be happy there.

The Super, having been in his bachelorhood, both urban and suburban, knew better; but he

also knew better than to force the issue. He must reverse the order described in the verses quoted at the end of Chapter II, and, for this once, let Herself have "his way" without suspecting it. His campaign was rather elaborate, but there is no need to go into tiresome particulars and tell how he planned week-end excursions into the suburbs to visit acquaintances happily domiciled there, how in this way he gradually accustomed her to the "country" (for she made no distinction between rural and suburban), and how, finally, taking her casually 'round to inspect a small manse which he knew was shortly to be vacated, he drew from her an admission that it might be tolerable as a permanent residence.

So the thing was done. The new house was leased, the furniture was packed, shipped and set up again, carpets were laid and all things put in apple-pie order, "between a sleep and a sleep"; and on a nippy morning in April, 1902, the firm moved comfortably into the little street

on the edge of Wister Woods, from which it has not since cared to emigrate.

Here, on that April morning, occurred not merely an exchange of one commonplace dwelling for another; it was a spiritual anabasis, an advance into a new land rich in strange beauties that had only just begun to unfold. Forsythia bushes fluttered brave yellow flags in the front gardens, an occasional crocus starred the faint emerald of the narrow side lawns; the annual miracle was as yet little more than a promise, but it was enough. Infinitely better than the outlook upon city backyards (which seldom blossom except artificially upon Mondays) was the broad hinterland of slaty sky and gray woods, still cold and bare, but soon to be pleasantly upholstered and indented with green and blue vistas never before enjoyed and scarcely imagined by these city dwellers. Nor could their fancies fully picture the rich procession of the seasons, through more than a score of years, that was to bless and cheer them there.

So, from all the annoyances and distractions that had been, from all things distasteful to all that one (or, in this case, five) might yearn for, here, at last, was "the green escape." Glorious! But, unfortunately, before the end of the first week there came another. Annie Mullen broke loose! and without even giving notice. It was a sad blow; for Annie had seemed to be a fixture, a serviceable and inexpensive fixture ($2.50 a week including washing and ironing, Thursdays and every other Sunday evening out). She had been in charge of the firm's—let us say—mechanical department for a full year, which was a record up to that time. From the beginning of things the partners had aimed to keep a forelady of that sort in the house, but they usually had two—one going and the other coming. It was a relief to find one willing to be static. In the first few months of her administration Annie seemed loath to go out even on Thursdays. She had started out eagerly enough on her very first Thursday, but in less than an hour had returned to the kitchen; and there

the General Manager had found her, sitting with her hands in her lap and staring fixedly at the floor.

"What's the matter, Annie?" she asked.

"Lord save us!" says she, shaking her head slowly from side to side, "there do be such a lot o' people in th' wurrld."

Yet—the pathos of it!—of all those people none ever came to call upon Annie in her kitchen in town; and though she did at length pluck up the courage to go out into the crowded streets on Thursdays it was probably only to carry her wages to the Saving Fund. She never mentioned having a friend, nor spoke, indeed, of her affairs at all. Why, then, should the new, and so much quieter, environment have wrought such black magic upon her? Something, surely, had touched her. It was plain enough, as they say on the Sporting Page, that she was "playing for her release." Breakfast on this particular morning, in that first week in the suburbs, had been a tragedy; Luncheon had been the Second Act. The Super, returning from his office in

town in the late afternoon, became the unconscious villain in the Third (and final) Act.

"Here, Annie," said he, "put these in the refrigerator."

"What's them?" she demanded.

"Deviled Crabs," said he.

"Aha!" she cried, with a wild laugh, "as if them that's in this house wasn't devilish an' crabby enough already."

(Exit the villain, to consult with the General Manager above stairs who had her hands full, with a couple of croupy cadets.)

"What row have you had with Annie?"

"None; and, oh, I hope you haven't had any."

"No, but I will now," said he, starting down stairs again. In the narrow hallway he encountered the tragédienne.

"Out o' the way, little man!" said she, passing on to her apartment under the roof; "an' I'll be thankin' the woman of the house to have me wages ready against I come down ag'in," she called from the upper landing.

In five minutes she was gone, bag and baggage, and the firm never saw nor heard of her again.

It was explosive catastrophes like this, frequent enough in the years to follow, that made fairly good pinch-cooks of the Super and all the juniors. On this disastrous evening, of course, the World's Most Competent Woman Chef had more important matters to engage her in the sickroom. So the villain in the play took from the ice-box and put into the oven the delicatessen stuff which had just ended the career of poor Annie, brewed a pot of coffee, made some toast, rescued the baby from the coal scuttle, set the table, prepared the tray for the invalids, again separated the baby from the coal scuttle (upset this time), answered the telephone (wrong number "excuse it, please"), imprisoned the baby in his high-chair (exchanging cold prunes for the two lumps of coal in his more or less pink fists) took the tray up and brought the General Manager down-stairs; and, gallanting her into her chair, glowing the while with par-

donable pride in his efficiency, besought her to eat whether she felt like it or not.

"What's burning?" she asked, sniffing.

"The devil—the crabs!"

They were cooked to cinders.

For years after that the General Manager could not be induced to touch that savory seafood. Not until the summer when the family crowded into the tiny cottage (leased furnished) at Holly Beach, and those capable, coffee-colored maids, Agnes (au lait) and Catherine (noir)—who, by the weigh, together tipped the beam at something more than 500 pounds, and under whom the ancient folding-bed groaned and disintegrated, one tragi-comic night—not, we say, until those two grand cooks, taking the crabs, fresh-caught by the elder boys in the back bay, boiled and picked them and—but we are becoming incoherent; and besides we are ahead of our story.

The strange flight of Annie Mullen was, indeed, a tragedy. It threatened to make that April, for one household, at least, uncommonly

tearful. Appeals to the Intelligence Office elicited none of that euphemism in any female form, or of any color. But at last two young mulatto girls came 'round to the house together, and both were taken in. From that time, the firm's servants invariably came (and went) in pairs; and they were almost all, thereafter, of the Ethiop strain. Casting, now, a retrospective glance over that long, dark line, it is impossible to single out one that wasn't a fairly capable cook or nurse maid. They were good while they lasted, and their work was not easy. As one of them remarked after the arrival of Stephen—who was No. 5, Nancy being No. 4—"Mah land! dis is suhtinly gittin' to be de childernest house Ah evah did see!"

It was so. The place was full of junior partners, not one of them able to earn his keep, although in some strange way each seemed to bring along an addition to the working Capital. The Super, it is true, may have had to extend his daily prowling about to find it, but it was always there. At any rate, by just a little closer appli-

cation of the paternal nose to the grindstone, the firm managed to keep a few jumps ahead of the Sheriff. But, since the truth must be told, the whirling of the grindstone was not unaccompanied by grumbling on the part of the bread-winner. In progeny he was uncommonly rich, but he was never unduly delighted at the news that there was to be another dividend shortly.

Very old friends of both the parents (including the officious grandparents, who, now chastened and subdued, had reëstablished their welcome) used to call and make such remarks as "Ah! my dears, these are your happiest days, now while the children are young, etc., etc." Such assurances were no less annoying than the frank pity of certain yoked, but childless, contemporaries, whose calls, though "few and far between" were never "like angels' visits." One of this class who was particularly exasperating was the ultra-fashionable wife of an old chum of the Super's. "Oh, no," said this one, in the small talk of an unusually long-drawn-out evening, "I never read Dickens, because I never expect to have to

associate in real life with the sort of characters he introduces into his novels."

"So, my lady," thought the Super to himself, "how can you bear to come here, then? For this is certainly getting to be a Dickens of a family." An ugly light came into the Super's eye, which the General Manager was not slow to note, and frown at. But the lady, quite unconscious of it, went on talking. The Super began to say veiled sarcastic things, ignoring the guarded signals of the hostess. But the latter, though she gave to the visitor not the slightest hint of her feelings, made it quite plain to her mate that she was displeased with him and he might expect her wrath to descend upon him in some way, and that shortly. Still the Super went his headlong way, and presently said something that was perilously close to unpardonable *brusquerie*. Instantly the General Manager arose and passed quietly out of the room, her rapier glance at her husband hitting him full between the eyes, though it was quite unnoticed by the guests. The self-complacent lady went off upon another

tangent of chatter, directed this time at her stolid husband, who had been immersed all evening in a book. The other husband heard his irate Queen ascend the stairs and wondered what was going to happen. Next instant the blow fell. There came the sound of a shoe dropping on the bed-room floor directly above. What! would she dare do such a thing?

He did not wait to hear the thud of the other shoe, but, muttering an excuse, rushed up-stairs. The bed-room door was open, but the room itself was dark. After some fumbling, he found a match and struck it. There, in the middle of the floor was one of his own old shoes, but the room was empty. The communicating door into the nursery was open and so was the door from it into the hall. That, then, was the way she had doubled upon her track and escaped! He heard a rustle on the stairs, and, looking over the balustrade, he saw his wife sailing calmly into the parlor. When he had himself descended to earth again, the General Manager said to him, quite as if nothing had happened: "My dear,

I'm sure you—I mean, I'm sure the beer is quite cooled off by this time. Suppose you open a few bottles, while I get the lunch."

A wise old poet—Coventry Patmore—has handed down the dictum that

> A woman is a foreign land,
> Of which, though there he settle young,
> A man will ne'er quite understand
> The customs, politics and tongue.

The Super had had, and was to have again, many proofs of the General Manager's genius as an actress (for without possessing that talent to some degree no woman can hold a man in life-long bondage) but on that occasion—referred to ever after as "The Dickens Night"—she was superb. The situation was saved, the curtain fell upon a happy ending, and to this day two of the actors in the little comedy have not the slightest suspicion of what it was all about.

But these rambling reminiscences have led us far ahead of our tale. Yet this comment upon the General Manager's dramatic instinct recalls another instance of it, and will, therefore, lead

us back quite naturally to the point where we may gather up the fag-ends of the green escape in the Spring of 1902. It was an evening some three weeks after the exit of Annie Mullen. Herself at the piano had drifted casually into the "Moonlight Sonata"—for the young May-moon was looking in through the open window—while the Super, nearby, was fruitlessly struggling to make some verses.

"Does my playing disturb you?" she asked.

"No," he replied, "for I haven't an idea in my head, anyway."

"Do you know," she went on, "I've been thinking about Annie, and I believe I know what drove her back to Ireland—for I'm sure that's where she has gone—indeed, I feel certain I am right."

"Strange she never told us—"

"She didn't know herself what ailed her. It worked upon her so suddenly and so subtly. Of course Annie was from a country place in Ireland, and all she knew of America was the noisy city of Philadelphia, where she had landed.

Now when she came with us out here, isn't it quite probable that she saw or heard something that quite drove her out of her wits? I heard a thrush for the first time this morning, and it thrilled me."

The Super sat up very late that night, twisting to his own uses the instinctive guess of the General Manager, and the result was

THE SONG OF THE THRUSH

Ah! the May was grand this mornin'!
Sure, how could I feel forlorn in
Such a land, when tree and flower tossed their kisses to the breeze?
Could an Irish heart be quiet
While the Spring was runnin' riot,
An' the birds of free America were singin' in the trees?
In the songs that they were singin'
No familiar note was ringin',
But I strove to imitate them an' I whistled like a lad.
Oh, my heart was warm to love them,
For the very newness of them—
For the ould songs that they helped me to forget—an' I was glad.

So I mocked the feathered choir
To my hungry heart's desire,

An' I gloried in the comradeship that made their joy
my own—
Till a new note sounded, stillin'
All the rest. A thrust was trillin'!
Ah! the thrush I left behind me in the fields about
Athlone!
Where, upon the whitethorn swayin',
He was minstrel of the Mayin',
In my days of love an' laughter that the years have laid
at rest;
Here again his notes were ringin'!
But I'd lost the heart for singin'—
Ah! the song I could not answer was the one I knew
the best.

CHAPTER IV

Five Full Years

If the house on the edge of Wister Woods had ever risen to that degree of importance, actual or affected, which demands expression in armorial bearings, it must have had for its crest a thrush, a thrush rampant—or whatever the heraldic adjective is that describes a gentle songster in strenuous action. For that shy, brown bird figured prominently in the history of this struggling establishment. But since the big part it played was of later date, and of anything but a comic character, there is no perch for it in this chapter.

The years from 1902 to 1906, considered by and large, were as the five acts of an old-fashioned comedy. There were, to be sure, touches of melodrama here and there; accidents and storm-signals and hard work and knotty problems were plentiful enough, but through all ran a theme of homely domestic affections culminating in the triumph of virtue, and the dominant note was that of light comedy.

The firm had arrived now at a period of comparative prosperity. The Super, two years after his anonymous wedding, had assumed the job of business-managing back to life and health a venerable weekly newspaper which had fallen upon evil days. It was no easy job, for the effort to increase the circulation or the advertising revenue of a weekly—particularly a religious weekly, as this was—is like saying "Good Morning" to a deaf man. But the Super managed, by some special Heaven-sent grace, to put the *Weékly* not only upon its feet, but in the way of requiting its stockholders. So, while this work—now smooth-running and, therefore, less

exacting—engaged him during the day, he found relaxation and some addition to his income by scribbling jokes and verses at night.

It was arduous and confining, this night work, but it was pleasant withal, and kept him out of mischief; besides, it had its reward, as will appear shortly. Begun as an experiment, it soon proved fairly remunerative and its continuance became a necessity. Then, like many another infant industry, it called for protection. When the jest and jingle factory was buzzing away of an evening, it was essential that other departments of the establishment should not be permitted to interfere with it.

"Of course," said the General Manager, "we cannot afford to give up our social obligations entirely. Visitors will drop in occasionally when we least expect them, but let me hold them in check as long as possible. Hide yourself in the attic until you hear me yelling for help."

The literary foreman would consent to this only upon condition that the General Manager should not wear herself out in the care of the

other, and more important, infant department. Thus it came about that the daily routine was so arranged as to permit Herself at least an hour for a nap in the afternoons, and to ensure the retirement of all juniors to the nursery by 7 P.M. at the latest. To this end it was necessary to call in foreign laborers and to keep two such constantly employed. These two, the cook and the nurse-maid, were usually—as has been said before—of that class whose ancestors had emigrated involuntarily from Africa. Some of them were indifferent workers, but it would be incorrect to speak of them, in any sense, as colorless. Most of them were worthy and invariably interesting characters, and though they considerably increased the "over-head" they added much to the gaiety of the house.

There was one faithful old Mammy, who is remembered simply as Martha. She was the cook, and a good one. Two or three times each week, during the period of her service in the house, it was her duty to act as messenger between "Mistah Myahs" (the huckster, who

always came a bit too early) and the General Manager. There would come a knock at the bed-room door.

"Well?"—from the lady within.

"Good mawnin', Ma'am! Mistah Myahs is hyar."

"Oh, is he, Martha? Well, see what he has."

"Yas'm;" and Martha toddling to the head of the stairs would call down to the tradesman in the vestibule: "Mistah Myahs, she say whut yo'-got dis mawnin'?"

"I got spinach, beets, peas, sparrer-grass, radishes, lettuce, cabbage, apples, cauliflower, canned tomats an' corn, pepper-hash—" and so on through an interminable list.

Martha always waited patiently until he paused, and then, rapping again upon the door, made her report which never varied.

"Well, Martha?"

"Mistah Myahs say he got mos' evah'thing he mos' gener'ly always have."

"Very well, I'll talk to him presently."

The butt of the oft-repeated jest was not

Martha—cute old wiseacre!—but the man in the vestibule who thought himself so vastly her superior. Myers had book-learning and Martha had not. He was at some pains, on one occasion, to impress upon the General Manager that he had exact knowledge of the mechanical structure of some of our most curious English words —"gnaw," for instance. He was describing a raid made by some animal, probably a rat, upon his hen coop. "And when I went into the coob," said he, "there was two of them little chicks with their—why—legs geh-norred off."

The junior who laughed loudest at this anecdote when it was first told at table was—but, no; why mention him by name and hold him up to scorn for a fault he has since (partially) outgrown? For purposes of disguise let him be called "Webster." Once, in the quarter-hour of "rough-house" which the General Manager permitted at the close of the evening meal, when the game of "Guessing Animals" was going the round of the table, it was "Webster" who temporarily stumped the whole house. Even the

baby had guessed "C—t." (the first and last letters of the animal's name) and "L—n." had been easy enough, but when "Webster" announced: "My turn!—E—d.," everybody, after long puzzling, gave it up. The young orthographer was delighted. "Elephand!" said he, triumphantly. The Lady of Misrule checked the laugh that followed, but "Webster" was hurt and when his turn came again he sulked. "I'll give one for him," said his next neighbor, a smart elder brother, "and the letters are 'J—v.' Give it up? It's 'jirrav.' "

This was but one of many such indoor sports devised by the General Manager not only to sharpen wits but to feel out, and subsequently correct, the lack of them. But the incident of the "Elephand and Jirrav" was really of a later date than the period with which this chapter is supposed to deal. During those first five years on the edge of Wister Woods the juniors were allowed to run wild outdoors as much as possible, and it was the Super's job to put them through their paces in baseball, woodcraft, swim-

ming, football, skating, coasting—every sort of muscle-making and health-giving diversion in their several seasons. The important thing was not to make precocious "go-getters" or "live-wires" of the youngsters who were coming along so fast, but to put apples in their cheeks to keep the doctor away.

Meantime the General Manager kept her hand in at the piano and strove in every way to nurture any bud of artistic promise that might show so much as a pink petal to reward her. The result was not then encouraging. The Super himself was her most hopeless pupil. On Saturday nights she insisted upon dragging him off to the symphony concert in town, where, for the greater part of the first season he disgraced himself and annoyed her by going to sleep in his chair. But after a time he began to cock up an ear and take notice; and so, by dint of keeping everlastingly at it, she gradually succeeded in partially educating him. He became an enthusiastic—and, in time, almost an intelligent—lover of good music.

As a port of social call the house on the edge of Wister Woods began at about this time to fade out almost entirely. Excepting the grandparents, who had taken a small house nearby and who, to the end of their days, were always welcome, few acquaintances dropped in of an evening. It is a curious fact that although a large family is a potent discourager of individual selfishness it makes for a sort of communal insularity. This—shall we say?—"baby farm" was all sufficient to itself. Except for the necessary visits of milkmen, grocer's boys, laundrymen and the like, it might very well have been upon a remote island. Even "Willie Jones's yard" or "Susie Smith's house" were non-essential to it. The General Manager had early put an embargo upon excursions into those unknown regions. There might be snakes there of a certain sort, and other noxious things especially harmful to little children—and the Big Policeman might be asleep, or out shopping, or something. She preferred to have Willie Jones and Susie Smith and all the other children of the

neighborhood come into her own house and overrun the yard and make riot generally—where she could enjoy the fun, too.

So the juniors were quite happy in that arrangement. In cold or inclement weather the house shook by day with the romping of healthy youngsters up and down the stairs, or the shrill singing of them, grouped around the piano. In spring and summer they invaded the yard like a plague of locusts. One sparkling spring morning, toward the end of this period of the five full years, the Super, on his way in town, stopped to have talk with a genial neighborhood character, Dave Barrows, florist and gardener.

"If you can give us some of your time, Dave," said he, "I'd like you to fix up our garden this year and keep it in shape—"

"Man dear," Dave interrupted, "there's only one thing you can raise in that garden, and that's kids."

In the summer of 1906 that poor, down-trodden garden enjoyed a long rest. The first week of June found Herself and the Houseful estab-

lished, as boarders, in a comfortable old farmhouse far up in northeastern Pennsylvania, in the foothills of the Poconos. Counting Catherine "Noir," the maid, (whose subsequent shipwreck in a seaside folding bed is described in an earlier chapter), there were "eight in family" that year; and a few summers later the roster had risen to ten. Those were the golden days of health and jollity! There were haylofts, meadows, creeks and woods to be explored, craggy hills to be climbed, but, best of all, in a nearby hollow of those hills, a blue lake winking in the sun. There the Super put in many painstaking hours as swimming instructor, and later received more than full pay for his labor; for the thrill of plunging from a spring-board into clear cool water, with a flock of young athletes of your own tumbling in after, is not to be measured by any ordinary wage-scale.

In that summer (1906) fell the firm's tenth anniversary. Why is such an event arbitrarily called a Tin Wedding? This one was studded with nuggets of richer metal. Everybody was

in the pink of high health, and so was business. A dollar was worth something more than 90 cents in those days; and, strangely enough, the dollars were fairly plentiful—at least the item of Bills Receivable on the Firm's books almost squared with Bills Payable. And in addition to all this, the Super, without benefit of patent medicine or of police investigation, was beginning to get his picture in the papers. So that summer was altogether delightful, as every summer should be, and the fall was to bring in a rich harvest, also.

Something must be said here in explanation of this interesting (photographic) development. Some two years before, the Super, in casting about for something new to write about, had hit upon the Italian immigrant—then little known and greatly misprized by the American public—as a likely and worthy subject for kindly humorous exploitation in verse. These dialect sketches, striking a new note, were well received—except by the unlettered among the race they were designed most to benefit. The

poet began to be invited out to lecture before women's clubs and other organizations; and then followed so many requests for copies of this or that bit of verse, it seemed (to the firm, at least) that if a small book were to be published enough copies might be sold to pay the printer's bill.

The dreamer of dreams had hoped to present as a Tin Wedding gift to his mate a letter from some big publisher accepting the material for that first book and announcing its early publication. But nothing came of that. Two New York publishing houses were approached, but they promptly declined. It was then that the General Manager urged the author to be his own publisher. So the thing was done. The type was set in the *Weekly* composing room, John Sloan furnished the illustrations (in quality and quantity far beyond what his contract called for), and in October "Canzoni" burst upon the literary world. Two thousand of them! How were they ever to be sold? Wonder of wonders! they melted away before the

snows of November began to fall, and the forms were feverishly put back upon the press for two more editions before Christmas.

This was an intoxicating time. More frequently than ever the new poet's picture blossomed in the public prints; and journals that used no illustrations sought to describe him in cold type—a most difficult thing to do. B. L. T., in his column in the Chicago *Tribune,* gravely assured his readers that the new bard "looked like Ossian." That was near enough, perhaps, as a guess, for if Ossian ever did exist he must have been a Gael. Yet others, claiming that they once did "see him plain," insisted that the "Canzonian" looked like an Italian. One never can be sure about these things.

> Oh, wad some power the giftie gi'e us
> To see oursel's as others see us!

One day, while the bard's thoughts were in the clouds and his feet were carrying him slowly back to his office after lunch, an elderly woman in black, who had been observing him apprais-

ingly from the doorway of a Settlement House, descended upon him with a tract and the request that he "visit our little Christian Chapel." He bowed, took the tract, and, upon glancing at it later, found it was printed in Hebrew.

It was at this feverish time, too, he discovered to his dismay, upon arriving in a small town in central Pennsylvania, where he was to deliver a lecture, that he had neglected to put his shaving things in his traveling bag. In the town's best barber-shop he fell into the inexpert hands of a 'prentice. The razor was good, but the operator was not. The nervous victim in the chair stood the torture as long as he could. "Let me have that razor, son," said he, and, sitting up in the chair, speedily completed the job himself. When he had done, he noticed the youth whose ministrations he had rejected looking at him not with the angry resentment that might have been expected, but with positive admiration.

"I know who *you* are now," he said.

The bard was pleased. No matter what fa-

mous men may pretend, it is a fact that no one tires of adulation. It was gratifying to think that here in this little corner of Pennsylvania he was already becoming so famous that—

"Yes, sir, as soon as you take that razor I know who you are. You're a barber from New York."

CHAPTER V

The Thrush

From the first chirp of katydid until Christmas, that autumn of the Tin Wedding was a season of unalloyed delight. The changing colors of woods and sky had never been richer or warmer—or so it seemed—and within the little house there was an air of affluence and health and joy that overmatched the outer glory. Prosperity and promise were both at flood.

Some time in October Dr. Maurice Francis Egan (kindly gentleman and most transparent of diplomats!) had urged the "Canzonian" to

send him a copy of *the* book for presentation to the President in the White House. It was quite in tune with the strenuous character of T. R. that he should find time on the eve of an important Election Day—and again within a few hours of his departure upon a momentous trip to Panama—to write letters of appreciation of the gift and its contents. To the Super, with his one-track mind, it seemed marvelous that such a thing could be, though in a calmer moment, later, it became plain enough to him how the trick was done—how the genial gentleman, who was afterward to be our efficient and capable Minister to Denmark, laid before the President the little book open at the page bearing "The Song of the Thrush" (quoted in Chapter III) and how the President, turning to his secretary, dictated the letter, in which he said, among other things: "I was delighted with the poem on the thrush; and some time I want you to go out where you will hear either the wood thrush or the hermit thrush, and then

write about the American thrush in the present as charmingly as you have written about the Irish thrush of the past."

It was a most gracious note, and the recipient, pleased—as who would not be?—replied that it would be treasured as a family heirloom, "for the delectation of many young folks, the last of whom, I hope, has not yet arrived." "Your suggestion as to the thrush, my dear Mr. President," he added, "I accept as a command, and I shall benevolently pursue the American species the moment the thrush season opens in these parts." Since it was at about this time that President Roosevelt had launched the first of his several philippics upon a matter "vitally affecting human society," the Super felt no hesitancy about thus delicately hinting at his own expectations. Knowing what he knew, he was justified in entertaining the pious hope that a new olive branch would arrive with the first thrush of the following spring. What he did not know was that he was not to fulfil to the letter the com-

mand he had accepted, that instead of benevolently pursuing the thrush the bird itself was to be the pursuer.

The spring of 1907 came late to Wister Woods. April had been uncommonly cold and rainy, and it was not until the second week of May that the chill-checked buds upon the trees were warmed and loosed by steady south winds. The belated spring was rushing in with the dawn, upon that second Sunday in May, when the man, after dispatching some urgent messages over the telephone, lifted the sash of an eastward window and stood looking out upon the brightening sky. Thither, presently, from her chamber at the opposite end of the house, the woman came; and together they drank in the airy wine of that first morning of mature May.

A balmy gush swelled through the open windows, but there was no breeze abroad to stir the tenderest leaf. The world was achingly still. Suddenly from some nook in the woods, but nearer the house than they had ever heard that

timid bird before, a thrush began to sing. There was no preliminary quaver of sleepy trills, but a full burst of song, a continuous cascade of rich bell-notes and high runs, piercingly sweet. There was no other sound anywhere; no other animate thing appeared to be astir, and the sole melodist continued hidden from the watchers at the window. In the infrequent intervals of the song they could hear their own hearts beating.

The flood of emotion was too deep and strong for overwrought nerves, and she who was most in need of calm was the first to break the enchantment. He led her back slowly to the peace and comfort of her own chamber, and fixed an arm-chair for her by a wide window that looked out, under the boughs of an old maple, upon the quiet street. Here she had scarcely settled herself, when the air shook again with music sudden and loud. There, within a dozen feet of the window, upon a gnarled branch of the maple, was the thrush—surely the same bird—singing heart-breakingly.

Call it fevered fancy, superstition—or what

you will—but never before had the house on the edge of the woods been the object of such intimate and persistent visitation from a bird so customarily shy; and never before had there been need so great for a song of hope and cheer as the partners within those walls were soon to know.

. . . . .

The little girl who came into the world at about mid-morning of that lovely Sunday in May was a broken blossom. From the outset it was clear that she would never run about and play or know the ordinary joys of active childhood. It was the first real sorrow that had fallen upon the house, and the iron entered deep into two souls. But Herself—although the burden, as usual, was to weigh most heavily upon her—was never without hope. She selected for the little crumpled bud a quaint, old-fashioned name—Brenda—and for seven years thereafter the child was first in her waking thoughts. Yet

there was never any slighting of the others, whose demands upon her were constant.

That summer, which found the family, including the two large Ethiop servantmaids, crowded into the small red cottage at Holly Beach, was a merry one; and so was the next, spent in the old farmhouse in the Poconos. The star actor that year was Whooping Cough, and it played many rôles, ranging from low comedy to near-tragedy. For "one consecutive night" three sturdy boys in one bed, who were full of whooping cough and huckleberry pie, achieved an extemporaneous dramatic performance which was comic only in retrospect. That same treacherous foe of childhood had wasted little Brenda to the merest shadow, and she was carried home in September—as everybody, with one exception, thought—to die. For weeks she lay practically unconscious and refusing all nourishment, even the weak barley-water permitted her; but her spirit was tenacious, and it was constantly watched over and aided by

another like it. One night the Super was awakened and told to prepare the nursing bottle and bring it quickly. Brenda was crying, but, so far as the man could judge, it was the same fretful moaning. "No," said the wiser watcher, "that is a hungry cry." And so it proved. Brenda began from that moment to come back slowly from the valley. There was a mission for her in the world, and it was a noble and complete work she was to do in the five years still to be allotted her. Those five years were full enough "of a number of things" which were scarcely calculated to make Herself and the Household "as happy as Kings." But the winds were tempered to Brenda. She grew into a blithe and happy spirit. Before she was three years old she developed an uncannily acute sense of hearing. The moment one of the other members of the household opened the street door and set foot in the hall, the little elf would call from her chair in the nursery, "Hello! Nancy, come up," or "Hello, Mother!" or "Hello! Tom" —and she never guessed wrong. She was a

potent agent in the soul-development of those around her. She made knightly lads of her brothers, who would willingly drop bat and ball to squire her.

Hers was the only wholly happy life; yet into those seven years of its duration were crowded all of the most feverish frets of that teeming middle-class menage. It was a mercurial time, and the road the family traveled was rough and hilly, bringing a succession of sudden ups and downs. But even from the depths the rosy heights were seldom lost to sight and there were many spots of beauty along the way; and many an object looming up ugly and ominous, viewed from a distance, proved upon near approach to be a blessing. It was so with that other "bird visitation" which eventuated late in that fall when Brenda was on the mend. This bird was no stranger to the house. Its coming was not unexpected, nor—it may be admitted—was it particularly welcome. Strange that the poet and parent, who was also an incorrigible jester, should have been such a magnet for the birds.

A few days after this latest visit the Super composed upon it, under the title

THE IRISH BIRD-CHARMER

Wid more or less o' tuneful grace,
As fits a Celtic singer,
I've praised the "great bird of our race,"
The stork, the blessin'-bringer.
When first to my poor roof he came,
How sweetly he was sung to!
I called him every dacint name
That I could lay my tongue to.
But glory be! that praise from me
So pleased the simple crayture,
His visits here have come to be
A sort of second nature.
I'm glad to see him now an' then,
But glory be to Heaven!
If here he isn't back again,
An' this is number seven!

Och! though this gift o' song may be
In manny ways a blessin',
It brings some popularity
That gets to be disthressin'.
Now, mind, I love this Irish bird—
We couldn't live widout him—
An', sure, I'll not take back a word
I ever said about him,

But now when all these mouths to feed
Ate up our little savin's,
The birds whose visits most we need
Are ould Elijah's ravens.
Begor'! if they were 'round these days
An' I could make them hear me,
I'd sing them such a song o' praise
'Twould keep them always near me.

This was Fred, a physically perfect baby, who came to be Brenda's playmate and later her helpful mentor.

Since "Elijah's ravens" would not come at call, it was necessary for the Super to emulate the horseman in one of Stephen Leacock's nonsense novels, and "ride off furiously in all directions." The financial panic of 1907 had made his managerial work at the *Weekly* office doubly hard, but it was necessary, also, to travel about the country on profitable lecture tours, and in the intervals of leisure he wrote verses. Publishers were courting him now, and in April of 1909 another book appeared—"Carmina," dedicated "To Herself"—and in 1912 a third, "Madrigali," which was dedicated to Brenda. But

the strain of the daily business battle, for which, in spite of the paper's successful weathering of the prevalent storms, he was little fitted by temperament or training, hit him rather hard in the late spring of 1909. His imagination ran amuck and eloped with his sense of humor (which, after all, is synonymous with the sense of proportion) and the summer of that year, which should have been, as usual, a happy holiday time for Herself and the Houseful, was full of care and foreboding.

September brought what seemed to the Super's excited fancy the crowning sorrow. Nancy, then six years old, was taken down with typhoid fever. But here again the fearsome specter became upon intimate acquaintance an angelic spirit. It gave the foolish man something else to think about, made him find time for daily visits to the hospital, and he and the little girl returned to health together. Panic times were past. The next year was the most prosperous thus far in the history of the *Weekly*.

The Super went off for a trip to England and Ireland that was pleasant, but selfish—for he left at home the one who was most deserving of reward. He came back to a house that had got along quite well without him; and then followed several years of comparative comfort and peace.

In the May when Brenda was five years old Wister Woods were uncommonly populous with thrushes. At about that time, also, the Lyric Year contest was announced, offering worthwhile prizes for the three poems adjudged best. During the greater part of that May the Super gave himself up to the writing of an ode which had been long taking shape in his mind and heart.

In spite of that most poetic of all world events which happened in the little town of Bethlehem "in the solemn midnight, centuries ago," it is a canon of certain squeamish critics that childbirth is not to be mentioned in the presence of the maidenly muses. The Super, poor, foolish fellow! could not then—nor can he yet—understand why, though the meeting of lovers, licit

and illicit, may be sung about *ad lib.* (and even *nauseam*), the unfolding of the perfect flower of love should be unmentionable except in a convention of obstetricians.

He realized that what he was moved to write was not likely to be generally approved, but his heart was in it, and when it was finished (barely in time to enter the Contest) he, at least, knew that "To a Thrush" was a true poem. It was awarded the second prize. This windfall of unexpected gold, together with some others growing out of it, helped toward the purchase of a new and larger home, nearby, into which the Houseful removed in the next May. In the following March Brenda and Fred were simultaneously stricken with pneumonia, from which Fred recovered speedily enough.

In the ode "To a Thrush," [1] the poet had prayed

> "That She who in another May
> Came out of heaven, trailing care,
> May never know that sometimes gray
> Earth's roof is and its cupboards bare."

[1] "Canzoni and Songs of Wedlock," pp. 161 to 165.

That prayer was answered, not as the one who framed it wished, but as One in His inscrutable wisdom willed. The little elf-child's mission was ended; and, whatever accomplishments may yet be credited to her brothers and sisters, hers will still have been the one flawless record.

. . . . .

In the calendar of every domestic establishment there is always at least one year upon which it is not pleasant or profitable to dwell. It was so with the house on the edge of Wister Woods, and the year was 1914. Business worries—almost entirely imaginary as before—again oppressed the breadwinner, who lay in hospital for a month. When, with health restored, he came back again to the workaday routine, Europe was in the grip of war and the whole world was on the brink of chaos—but there was Herself, superb in her strength and confidence, and in her arms a new and perfect little girl who was named Frances Joan. "And they lived happily ever after."

CHAPTER VI

The Italian Renaissance

There had come a time—somewhere back in the neighborhood of 1909—when good servants, once plentiful enough in Germantown, became scarce and arrogant. Also, gentle housekeepers developed unladylike piratical traits and preyed ruthlessly upon each other's preserves. The General Manager of the house with which this history deals saw her last capable colored auxiliary stolen from beneath her very eyes. Followed a period of dearth and despair. Then

came Sacco Luisa, whose title is here set down after the Italian fashion, the family name first.

Sacco Luisa spoke very little English. Her sisters, who came out from Italy, one after another in the next few years, and entered the General Manager's service, spoke less. But they were led around by the hand and taught the names of things. They all became kitchen and nursery jewels. Here is the honor list in its chronological order:

Sacco Luisa

Sacco Maria

Sacco Giuseppina.

No predatory ladies, with golden lures, were ever able to steal these perfect maids away—but tempestuous young men of their own race were more successful. Luisa, who was the best mother's helper the house ever knew, was stolen by Jim Malfatto. Jim was pleased to call himself a master plumber, but he was to prove himself more than that.

In that temporary period of prosperity following the windfalls of 1912-13, when it was decided in family council that the time was auspicious for the purchase of a more suitable home, it was agreed to set about the business with deliberate care. Philadelphia, designed by the peace-loving Penn as "a greene country towne," has been known almost from those earliest days as "the city of homes." That it continues to deserve that title is due to the fact that while it has grown in urban sophistication it has not lost its chief charm, which is, one might say, its suburbanity. No other American city is richer in green environs. All its suburban sections are lovely, and Germantown has charms as numerous and varied as any other. It affords show places for the wealthy and fashionable and comfortable cottages for the poor. Herself and the Super were, fortunately, never plagued with social aspirations or yearnings for vain display. They wished simply to get the greatest return of solid comfort for the little money they had to invest. After a wide tour of

inspection they came back to their starting place and bought the house next door, for a price too ludicrous to mention, a cash outlay of $500, and a Building Association mortgage for the balance.

A few hundred dollars had been spent for repairs before they took possession of the new home; and now, having been settled in it about two years, they felt they might afford to spend as much as a thousand dollars more for additional sleeping quarters on the third floor. It is here that Jim Malfatto enters. Jim's office, in relation to the establishment at this time, may be described as Chief of the Water Bureau. He had strolled around one Sunday morning in the late Spring to repair a leaky spigot in the kitchen, and the Super engaged him in earnest conversation.

"Jim," he said, "you stole Luisa from us and I expect you to make amends. We are thinking of extending the third floor to the back-line of the second, which should give us two more small bedrooms and another bathroom. Of course we will want you to take care of the plumbing, but

why not take charge of the whole operation and find a builder for us?" Jim promised to do what he could, and that same afternoon he returned with a German-American of his acquaintance, who was a contractor and builder, and together they went over the situation. It was understood that Jim was to bring the estimate around on the following Sunday. Before they left, the Super took Jim aside and said:

"When you come around next Sunday, Jim, I want you to bring two estimates. One of them —the high one, and you can make it as high as you please—you will present to the General Manager and me; the other you will save for my private ear. Do you understand?"

"I gotcha," said Jim, who, though he could speak his native Italian upon occasion, employed a fluent Americanese for every day, "you want to put a surprise over."

When he came to make his report the following Sunday, he was full of enthusiasm. He was prepared, he told the Super and General Manager, to give them something fine; and he ex-

plained the plans in detail. "The whole job," said he, in conclusion, "will only set you back $2300." The General Manager shook her head in dismay, and the subsequent proceedings interested her no more. Even the Super, forgetting for the moment that all Italians are good actors, imagined the worst. Jim, plainly disappointed and surprised at the reception given his report, went over his figures again. It might be possible, he said, to shave the price down to $2100. No! the council decided it was quite out of the question, and so the matter was put out of mind, by the General Manager at least.

At the street door the actor whispered to the Super: "That other feller's bid's too high; he wants Eighteen-fifty. The job can be done for an even thousand; I'll do it meself for that." The Super was skeptical, but Jim insisted, and so the bargain was struck. During the next month or two the conspirators held clandestine meetings at a neighboring cigar store and plans were made for a roomy bathroom, with all the usual fixtures, including a slate-enclosed shower

(such as tub-shy boys are always glad to use) and one big sleeping-porch that would comfortably accommodate five beds; the whole to be of brick, and tin-roofed, fitted with wide windows, the same to be copper-screened, with adjustable, weather-tight sashes—in fact a regular A-1 job in every way.

On the first of August the family, utterly unconscious of what was in the wind, was shipped off to the mountain farmhouse for a six weeks' stay. Within an hour after they had gone, supply-men began to arrive and dump lumber, bricks, cement, etc., in front of the premises. Jim, who was architect, master-builder and chief all-round laborer, had called in as helpers three or four uncles and cousins, all "lazy" Italians, who were on the job from four in the morning until nine at night—until the Super, returning from his first week-end in the mountains, called a halt upon such un-American behavior.

Jim "slept on the job," and from Mondays to Fridays he and the Super, on adjoining cots, discussed every little detail of the work until

they nodded off. Jim was bookkeeper, time-keeper and supreme court upon all questions of cost. The Super's chief job was to keep his own mouth shut on week-ends in the mountains; and, while in town, to enjoin silence upon any neighbors who might be inclined to write to the vacationists.

On one memorable August evening word came over the long-distance telephone from New York that Joyce Kilmer was coming over to interview the Super upon some literary matter, and Jim was sent off to scour the neighborhood for ice. There was a solitary bottle of excellent champagne in the cellar—a gift of the previous Christmas—which, in the time it takes a fast train to travel ninety miles, was cooled to a nicety and fit to be drunk by a young poet who was to become, a few short years later, one of his country's deathless heroes. So there, in the disheveled kitchen, with tea-cups for beakers, Joyce and Jim and the Super drank, in the blood of the grape of France, success to the job in hand, which seemed at the moment—to two of

them, at least—the most important work in the world.

Warmed by the bubbling grape, though he swore he "wouldn't swap a bottle of good Chianti for a bucketful o' that stuff," Jim obliged the company with a dissertation upon the art of making wine; a discourse which might now be helpful to many—if there had been a stenographer present, and if it were lawful to disseminate such wisdom in this degenerate day. Later, when Joyce and the Super addressed themselves to the particular mission that had brought the interviewer over from New York and began between them to concoct an article upon "American Humor and Humorists" which was designed to excite—and subsequently did stir up—a little discussion, Jim grew sleepy and went off to cast up his day's accounts, and so to bed.

Next morning Kilmer scornfully vetoed his host's bacon and eggs. He was on office business, he explained, and therefore entitled to an unlimited expense account. So he haled the

Super into the Bellevue-Stratford and there ordered one of those Gargantuan gorges which were his special delight. Joyce Kilmer was a grand trencherman, in addition to being—as everybody now knows—a good poet and a soldier brave to the rash and impetuous end. "May perpetual light shine upon him!"

. . . . .

When the Super started off upon his last week-end in the mountains there was still much to be done on the building operation. Jim was sure he could complete the job by Monday, but to give him an extra day of grace it was decided not to bring the family home until Tuesday. Accordingly on that day, the 11th of September, the caravan came down from the mountains. The train was an hour late arriving in town, and the horde was hungry, so a stop was made for luncheon in the Station restaurant. They had to put two tables together to accommodate the Houseful and hunt up a high-chair for the baby. And it was necessary for the improvident

provider—on the verge of being stony broke, as who, returning from a vacation, is not?—to do considerable scheming, that all (including the restaurateur) might be satisfied. During the progress of the meal the Super noticed a gentlemanly, but hungry-looking neighbor, watching Herself and the Houseful with keen interest. As the family was leaving, this man arose and, blocking the Super's way, inquired: "Is that all your family?" Now it happened that two of the older children had been sent off to do some necessary shopping, so the Super answered rather bruskly: "No!" But repenting of his rudeness, later, he turned back and explained to the kindly inquirer that what he had seen was only seven-ninths of the Houseful. Thereupon the other poured out such words of admiration and frank envy as made the poor Super forget for the moment that there were any cares in the world at all.

Such are the simple joys of "the professional father." There was another in store for the Super, as he well knew, for within the hour he

had the heart-warming satisfaction of leading his flock into the new sleeping-porch, which Jim had completed on the dot. There, winter and summer, ever since—except for war-time and other short absences—they have harvested healthful sleep.

This, after all, was the cheapest and most profitable investment the house has ever made, for Jim, unlike most architects and builders, had kept well within his estimate; and, besides doing all and more than he had contracted to do, had completed the job in the time set.

CHAPTER VII

Feeding the Animals

Whatever disagreements there might be upon other questions of policy—and since this is a frank history it must be admitted not only that there *were* dissensions, but also that some of them were serious enough to give uncommon zest afterward to the joy of making-up—the General Manager and the Super were never at odds about the commissary department. It was understood from the beginning that there was

to be no stinting of the table, no matter how great the need for money in the other departments might seem to be.

The General Manager's worthy father, who died full of honors as chief of a board of admiralty surveyors, had been a very naughty boy. At least that was the story told of him by his uncle, who was supposed, also, to be his guardian and protector. Be that as it may, it is a fact that the bad boy—who ran away to sea, who became master of a ship before he was of age and who won for himself a high place among those captains courageous who were the glory of the American Merchant Marine—developed, in maturity, into a creature all gentleness and generosity. Martinet though he must have been to have reached the top in that rough school, he came out of it with hands unstained by any act of hasty, unjust discipline or of niggardliness to those under his authority. At his home table ashore, when he had quit the sea, there was always the formal grace before meat, which any one may find in the prayerbook favored of his

fathers, but the Captain also brought to the board another grace that had in it the tang and wisdom of the sea—"Eat hearty and give the ship a good name!"

The General Manager of the house by Wister Woods perpetuated the essence of that homely grace, and the feeding of the animals was always deemed a duty auxiliary (rather than secondary) to the nourishing and developing of their souls. Let no one suppose that this is attaching undue importance to the gross matter of pandering to bodily appetite. Many a family table which has grace before meat has none after it, as many another has intemperance without wine. There is, indeed, something more than an art in the business of feeding the animals. The General Manager approached the matter peculiarly fitted, by instinct and training, to make a continuous success of it. As cook in her father's house she had learned the mechanics of catering, as musician and singer she knew something of harmony, and as assistant at the hospitable board in her father's house she had had experi-

ence enough and to spare for the making of a finished hostess in her own.

She taught her own young animals to eat heartily, but with decent repression. She gave them the best and plenty of it; and insisted that the larder should always be equipped against surprise attacks from the outside. It was (says she) not one of her own, but a neighbor's young animal at her table, who, hearing the telephone message that another youthful guest would be unable to attend, cried: "All the more better for us!" It may have been necessary occasionally to send the "f. h. b." whisper around the board, but not often—and even then there was always enough of something wholesome. So everybody "ate hearty" and gave the ship a good name, and none of the crew has ever hungered to eat permanently aboard any other ship —at least not yet.

The Super (or, in this case, call him the Skipper, if you prefer) has always gladly approved for payment the most extravagant bill for ship's stores. Duty? Nonsense! There is a double

pleasure in it. If it is "more blessed to give than to receive," how much more blessed it is to do both in one operation. The Super pays (or contracts to pay) the provisioner's bills, because otherwise he would not get his share; and he is mighty fond of his share.

These lines are being written upon a Saturday night in October by one whose skilled hand has just come from the composing of a kitchen poem which will burst into perfect bloom upon the morrow morn. Its fragrance rising upon the frosty air, with the earliest church bells, will drift through the open windows of the sleeping-porch and make alarm-clocks of healthy young noses. Buckwheat cakes!

The preparation of this delight is a Saturday night rite which the Super selfishly arrogates to himself because he has joy in it, not because it is a compulsory duty. It must not, by any chance, turn out a failure, and so he does it himself. On such solemn occasions a new title is conferred upon him and the word goes through the house—"Mr. Wright is in the kitchen." This

is his formula for old-fashioned buckwheat cakes for, say, nine hearty fastbreakers.

Measure off accurately three and three-quarter cups (a scant quart) of straight, old-fashioned buckwheat flour, to which add one teaspoonful of salt. Break up and dissolve in a cup of lukewarm water half a compressed yeast cake. Have at hand one quart of cold water. Into a narrow-necked crock or pitcher (preferably one that holds about two quarts) pour alternately the flour and water, and keep stirring the mess until it is perfectly smooth and free of all lumps. Add the cup of yeast, after first making sure it is thoroughly dissolved, and stir the whole again for a minute or so. With an ordinary tea-saucer, right side up, for a cover, and a deep-dish under it to catch the overflow of fermentation, set the crock or pitcher in a moderately warm corner—and go away with the righteous assurance that you have made a good beginning.

There are still a few deft passes to be made in the morning. Pour the overflow, if any, back into the crock, add a quarter of a teaspoonful of

baking soda dissolved in a little boiling water, stir in a generous tablespoonful of black molasses, and everything is ready for the hot griddle. Serve with melted butter—plenty of it—and maple syrup or powdered sugar. What else would you? Country sausage? Oh, any one can have that; but here is a frosty morning dish that Philadelphians sing, and outlanders jest, about. Here is scrapple:

Clean a pig's head, nicely, neatly,
Boil till meat leaves bones completely.
When it's cold remove all greases,
Chop meat into little pieces;
Put the liquor and the meat
Back again upon the heat,
Stirring buckwheat flour in
Till it is no longer thin.
Pepper, salt and sage then bring
For its proper seasoning.
When the mess is thick and hot
It is lifted from the pot,
Poured into deep pans to mold
And so left until it's cold.
So ends Chapter I.
The sequel
Is a breakfast without equal!

The process of manufacture may sound bothersome, but it is worth all the trouble to those who cannot get the finished product in their local markets. Chapter II calls for a hot pan, with just enough grease crackling in it to ensure against scorching, and a sharp knife to slice the delicacy into segments, say, three inches square and not more than a third of an inch thick—

> And each flour-encrusted piece,
> Smiling in its fragrant grease,
> Takes a coat of golden tan
> From the ardor of the pan.
> Crisp and brown the outer crust, oh!
> Food to rouse the gourmand's gusto
> From your platter gives you greeting;
> Truly this is royal eating!

Pagan talk, all this? Far from it! Waterloo would not have been won upon the cricket-field at Eton if there had not been good kitchens contiguous to the crease. Nor, perhaps, was the precocious small boy far wrong who, upon first hearing the name and observing the cut of the

garment itself, concluded that an "Eton jacket" was so called because it was designed to interfere as little as possible with a healthy boy's natural development. There is no more heart-stirring joy in all the world, Herself and the Super will tell you, than the important business of feeding the animals. If it is to be fully enjoyed it must not be delegated to a menial. For this reason that degree of comparative poverty which denies a household the supposed blessing of a retinue of servants is itself, in many ways, the greatest of blessings.

It is certain, at any rate, that the happiest hours in the life of the one heroic figure in this humble history were those in which she was the direct administratrix of physical as well as spiritual comforts to those who constantly looked to her for both.

Of course it was the creature comforts—beginning with those holy and beautiful offices of first aid before the milkman is called in—which were first demanded of her by each new arrival. Poor slave of the nursery and kitchen? Let all

who may be moved to say that save their pity and read Wordsworth:

> Maids at the Wheel, the Weaver at his Loom,
> Sit blithe and happy; Bees that soar for bloom.
> High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,
> Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells.
> In truth the prison unto which we doom
> Ourselves, no prison is—

Poor old Wordsworth is now hopelessly mid-Victorian, but he did have the knack of putting many an ageless truth in enduring verse. Indeed there *is* poetry among the pots and pans; and the General Manager was not slow to find it there. In her kitchen she has composed many a lyric fricassee, many an epic pie, canticles of cake, sonnet sequences of soup and symphonies of salad. And she has had willing and eager helpers in the work of construction, and later of destruction and even of clearing away the debris. Distinguished men and women, upon occasion, have been pleased to fall in with the democratic routine of the house and help with the washing of the dishes. That test has never been proposed

to them, but if they voluntarily met it they rose many notches in the general esteem. The establishment fairly reeked with democracy, probably because it was so obviously poor there would have been no sense in pretending to be anything else. Fraternity and Equality was the tacit motto of the clan. None that lived up to it was ever rebuked—except one of the juniors whom the General Manager once discovered upon all-fours on the kitchen floor, lapping up milk from the cat's saucer.

That young democrat must have been Stephen, whose imagination very early led him off upon amazing tangents. At the age of five, or thereabouts, he was a curious protean creature which seemed to have the faculty of changing its character at will. It was Herself who first observed the signs and interpreted them correctly. If she noticed it wriggling along upon the ground she knew it was a worm or a "senk" (snake); or if it sat for the greater part of the day upon a few wisps of straw or a bunch of twigs, she guessed it was a hen or a robin.

She never disturbed or discouraged it, not even upon that trying occasion when it elected to be a circus horse and neighed and pranced and scampered.

And so throughout the livelong day,
Through house and yard and street
That charger held its fearsome way
And only stopped to eat.
But when, at night, a little lame,
It slowly climbed the stairs,
Behold! a gentle lady came
And made it say its prayers.
Now what a wondrous change you see—
Sh! Come and take a peep;
Here lies, as tame as tame can be,
A little boy, asleep.

The precocious imagination of that little boy subsequently went to sleep also, but it may awaken again and come to much more perfect flower and fruit—who knows? But there will be place in another chapter for observations upon this and kindred displays of individuality. We are concerned here with the feeding of the animals not with the blossoming of their souls.

There have always been in the house—as there are at this writing—certain animals not blessed, or burdened, with souls at all, and of these only words of praise may be set down. Their behavior has not always been perfect, but they have conducted themselves, as a general thing, above the average of their kind; and from the first moment of their admission to the circle they have earned their board and lodging. They are at present the three "fireside sphinxes" and midnight mousers—"Cherry," so called because he is black, "Weedy," the Maltese rescued from the briers in the neighboring woods, and "Sweeney," picked up on the streets by Frances and named by her for a jolly old bachelor, a college chum of her father's—and "Mike," scion of the grand clan of the Airedales, who is press agent of all-out-doors by day and watchful guardian of indoors by night.

These creatures, graduating so quickly from puppyhood, or kittenhood, into a gay maturity or—in the case of the cats—into a placid, even a haughty and contemptuous, stability, are be-

loved by all the household; and they deserve to be, because they are loyal, faithful, uncomplaining and grateful, and considerate of each other's rights. So much cannot always be said of the young human animals, who, as in every large family, are the frequent despair of their elders. Many and doleful are the conferences of those elders over the ungrateful behavior of this child, the laziness of that one, or the downright naughtiness of another. When will they ever grow up? When will they begin to think of something more important than food and sleep and play?

What vain things, after all, are these parental conferences and worryings over the vagaries of very young animals. With care and watchfulness and prayerful patience on the part of the seniors those juniors will eventually be guided to the work-benches predestined for them. They will slip all too soon out of the pleasant land of "Delight and liberty, the simple creed of Childhood"; and the present business is to strengthen them for the "shades of the prison-house" to

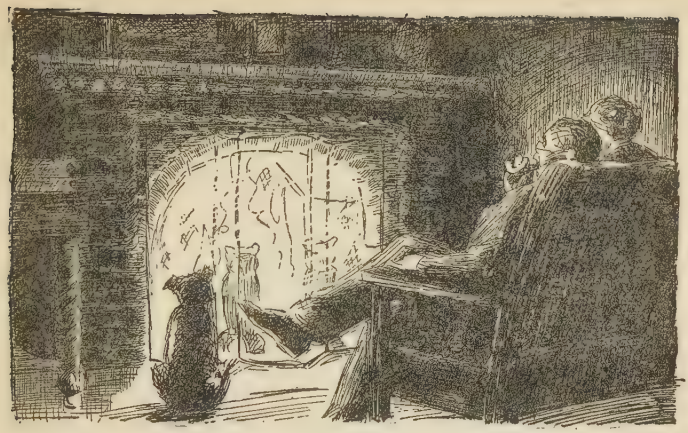
which they have been called not of their own will.

That, surely, is the thought that comes to many a man, in solitary midnight meditation upon his own tardiness in "growing up," and this is

THE MAN'S PRAYER

When all is still within these walls
And Thy sweet sleep through darkness falls
On little hearts that trust in me,
However bitter toil may be,
For length of days, O Lord! on Thee
My Spirit calls.

Their daily need by day enthralls
My hand and brain, but when night falls
And leaves the questioning spirit free
To brood upon the days to be,
For time and strength, O Lord! on Thee
My Spirit calls.



CHAPTER VIII

Classifying the Houseful

For even in things alike, there is diversitie, and those that doe seeme to accord, doe manifestly disagree. And thus is Man like God, for in the same things that wee resemble him, wee are utterly different from him. There was never any thing so like another, as in all points to concurre, there will ever some reserved difference slip in, to prevent the Identity, without which, two severall things would not be alike, but the same, which is impossible.

—Sir Thomas Browne ("Religio Medici").

Once, in one of the few foolish moments she has had since that early occasion of rash gra-

ciousness when she said "yes," the General Manager expressed a regret that the house had never had the privilege of welcoming two new arrivals simultaneously.

"I think it would have been interesting," said she, "to have studied here just two little creatures that were alike."

Later she was the first to admit the vanity of that human wish. The most that may be expected of twins is that they may chance to *look* alike; but as far as acting alike—

"Why, the thing is impossible," preached the Super, in one of his few moments of wisdom, "for that matter, if we had only one child in the house we couldn't expect it to act alike."

"What nonsense? Alike what?"

"Well, like itself from one day to the next. 'Monday's child is fair of face,' but it may fight with the neighbors' brats, or the cat, or a brier-bush, and as Tuesday's child, quite fall from grace."

Alice Meynell, who was a wise mother, as well as a delightful poet, tells us that "to attend to

a living child is to be baffled in your humor, disappointed of your pathos, and set freshly free from all the pre-occupations. . . . So with the uncovenanted ways of a child you keep no tryst. They meet you at another place, after failing you where you tarried; your former experiences, your documents are at fault. You are the fellow traveler of a bird. The bird alights and escapes out of time to your footing."

Still, as a bird-charmer, as student and tamer of the several wild varieties in her own aviary—including the Laughing Jackass first to fall into her beneficent net—the General Manager has been a prodigious success. Whatever may be her own low estimate of the measure of her accomplishment—and there have been times when it was low enough—the books of the house show a balance to her credit which can never be paid. The "uncovenanted ways" of the juniors, day after day under her constant observation, have been, by turns, her amazement and amusement, excitants of her hopes and fears, but never quite her despair. It was she who first dis-

covered the need of being "all things to all (little) men (and women)." This one a smile's silken leash might lead, and that one would demand the lash—or, at least, the threat of it. Various and subtle were the tests she brought into play to draw the wild, wee creatures a little out of themselves. She sought to lead and not drive them; and though, from the beginning, she drew them very close to her she was never quite able to determine what sort of bird each was likely to be when it came to full feather.

When each had reached what seemed to her a receptive age she tried the power of music upon these nestlings. One after another her boys were beguiled to the piano, and one after another they repaid her patient teaching by looking out of window instead of at the keys. Only one responded immediately and enthusiastically, and he was the last—but of him later.

So it was with the lure of words strung together. The bed-time story, ready-made in print or tailored to order on the spur of the moment, was always hailed with delight or as a matter

of course, but it never inspired one of those young birds to an emulative note. When they were a little older, the General Manager and the Super collaborated upon another sly test. They had early begun, and have since continued with increasing delight, the practice of reading in concert some classic bit of literature. They decided, while avoiding the appearance of making the matter compulsory, to take the older children into the circle. They wisely began with "The Christmas Carol"—it was just before the holidays—but that was as far as they got. Nothing came of it whatever. The "funnies" in the Sunday papers continued to snare the young blockheads.

They were alike in that, at least; and they were alike in the determination of each to have his, or her, own way. The realization of this fact used to anger the Super greatly until gray hairs brought him a modicum of wisdom. Most fathers are like that. In spite of the vainglorious vaunts of many men that by dint of fatherly duty they have succeeded in "winning the heart

of the boy," they never do quite reach the central citadel. That cannot be taken by storm, and is usually accessible only—if at all—to the gentle onsets of that mother heart under which it lay before the beginning of its pilgrimage. The most that any man can do is to be a good fellow and stand by in the event of a voluntary surrender.

The Super, having played baseball and football with his three eldest for many years, imagined that he had secured a pretty accurate line upon their characters. He had taught them, also, what he knew of the gentle art of self-defense, and when the opportunity came to see a real professional bout for the first time, the Super thought it best to go with them. Nineteen, Seventeen and Fifteen were equally eager on the way to the arena, but at the ring-side they were far from unanimous. The wind-up, between Benny Leonard and Sam Rubideau, was a peppery battle. Nineteen was bored and a little disgusted, Fifteen was mildly amused, but Seventeen was in the ring (in imagination) every

minute, and received and returned every blow. The sixth round worked up to a perfect climax, the bell saving Rubideau from a knockout. Seventeen was on his feet with the rest of the excited spectators, moving instinctively toward the ring. A youth of about his own size jostled him. "Hey!" demanded Seventeen, glaring at him, "what are you trying to put over?" "Nothin'," said the other. "Better not," said Seventeen.

Not long after that Seventeen joined the Marines. He led his battalion in marksmanship, but he got no chance to fight. Neither did Nineteen, in the Infantry. Which would have proved the more gallant? No one can say. They are both fighting now, valiantly enough, to make a living—and so is Fifteen-that-was. And they are all going their own sweet way, which, since it could not be helped in any case, is as it should be.

Those three, having passed their majority, are supposed to be "raised." Idle word! It may be fairly correct to say of indulgent parents of one child, who anticipate his every wish and plan

his career for him, that they "raise" him; but that sort of thing is not done in the large or even the middle-sized family. Most children raise themselves, and necessity is the best spur. It may be trite, but it is true, to say that everything worth while must be suffered before it can be enjoyed.

The "Circus Horse" mentioned in an earlier page, whose precocious imagination went to sleep, is beginning to prick up his ears again. There was still another such case of "suspended animation" in the house of this history. The eldest daughter, as a tiny baby, had a remarkable ear for music, but as a growing child could scarcely carry a tune. Being a girl, she took piano lessons as a matter of course, but she played perfunctorily, and she sang like a crow. About that time—she was nearly 16 then—striking servant-girls drove her into the kitchen and made a grand cook of her. Unconsciously she sang at her work, as she warmed to it, and her voice suddenly became natural, rich and sweet.

In such strange ways all these closely related yet curiously dissimilar birds that haunt the edge of Wister Woods, have been gradually coming to find themselves. Birds? Yes; but utterly unnatural migrants they will be, if, to the end of their days, they do not return—in memory, at least—to call down grateful blessings upon that city-circled sylvan sanctuary. In all its phases of budding green, of full-bosomed foliage, of "bare ruined choirs," of snowy, wind-swept reaches, Wister Woods will be hallowed ground for them. For in all seasons—for more than a score of years now—its aisles have resounded with one bird-call unlike any other that ever was or ever can be; a clear, full, far-reaching view halloo, that always brought them scampering home wherever they might be. Listen!

There came a time when that call was not much heard in Wister Woods. Even mother-

birds, upon rare occasions, grow weary of the cares of office.

The fall and winter of '17 and '18, full of vexations and real trials, of various sorts, weighed heavily upon Herself. Though nothing interested, everything worried her. Much was gray imagining, but, in truth, there was enough of real cause for anxiety. The Houseful was at that curious state of pause that sometimes falls between "sixes-and-sevens" and the beginnings of true development. The affairs of the firm, too, had suffered a jolt, and the Super was obliged to travel farther, and more frequently, on business trips. These absences were distressing both to the absentee and the invalid. In the course of one of them the poor, tired mother, who had bravely promised she would fight, gave way to a flood of tears. Immediately a snub-nosed angel appeared at her bedside—the same elfin four-year-old who, unnoted but not unnoting, had been playing about the room during the parting interview a few days before. Her baby brows were bunched in a frown, and,

imitating exactly the gesture and the words of the absent father, she pounded the rounded fist of one hand into the palm of the other, and said: "Fight! Mother, fight!"

That helped much. So, also, beyond doubt, did this message from a distant city timed to arrive at its destination on the morning of February 14:

There was a time, when we were young together and all the thorns of life were yet to seek, this day brought roses, in the wintriest weather, to burn your cheek.

Then, not alone the wanton winds that sought you were wont your lilies to incarnadine; your roses deepened when the postman brought you my valentine.

The words I wrote, my still fond breast remembers, were leaping flames from out a heart of fire; they breathed, nor have they lost in graying embers, young love's desire.

But now, my dear, this fervent song I sing you has holier designs on Heaven's wealth; I pray this little valentine may bring you—the rose of health.

Then the Spring came to Wister Woods, the Great War abroad drew to a close, the two lads who were away soldiering came back; and health and hope and new ambitions blessed Herself and the Houseful.

CHAPTER IX

The Silver-Plated Wedding

In one of the late years of the General Manager's first quarter-of-a-century in office she found herself in sudden need of a new washwoman, and drew from the neighboring employment agency a large and capable-looking person who introduced herself as "Miss Maduro Clara Jackson."

The General Manager explained to her that the laundry, where she would be expected to do most of her work, was rather small; and would

she mind being shortened to Clara? "Folks mos' gener'ly call me 'Maddy'," she said; and it was so ordered. Maddy was not at all secretive, and the General Manager was soon in possession of all the necessary information as to her origin and previous conditions of servitude. She was from Key West, Florida, and it was her father, porter in a cigar factory there, who had selected the name "Maduro" for her. That selection was a perfect, though, doubtless, a wholly unconscious prophecy; for on the joint testimony of the General Manager and Webster's New International Dictionary she was, indeed, "dark-colored and strong."

Maddy would not consider a regular interne job, but graciously agreed to give the house one day out of every week, frankly explaining that she preferred to go out by the day because in that way she was able to absorb at least six times as much gossip as continuous association with merely one household could afford. But she was generous, in this, as well as greedy; she disseminated gossip even where there was no prospect

of reciprocity and in defiance of every discouragement. One morning she brought in a particularly choice morsel and proceeded to discuss it with her breakfast. She told breathlessly a story of which this was the gist:

The nice-looking young woman, with two lovely children, who moved, only a month ago, into the house next door to Mrs. Gadder ("which I washes on Mondays") has run away with a man; and somebody, that looked like a cruelty officer, had to come and take the children away and the house is closed up and that was last Friday and here it is Tuesday! No, there couldn't be any doubt about it, for Mrs. Gadder (happening to be looking through the lace curtains in her own dining-room window) had seen the woman go away very early in the morning, with two traveling bags, in a taxi. And soon after that, Mrs. Gadder (happening again to be looking through her lace curtains) saw the cruelty man going out the gate with the two children, and they were crying.

But wait a minute! the strangest part is yet to

come. When Mr. Gadder came home Saturday night (he's a traveling man, but he's always home Sundays) Mrs. Gadder told him everything, and all of a sudden he said: "Oho! so that's who that woman was. I seen them two on a train goin' to Washington on Friday." And Mrs. Gadder said maybe it was her regular husband, because it was given out that he was a traveling man, too, and none of the neighbors had ever seen him. But Mr. Gadder said, "No, indeed, this fellow looked more like a lover than a married man; and, come to think of it, the woman didn't look very happy." So that settles it!

But it didn't; it wasn't settled, in fact, for a week. When Maddy came to work the following Tuesday morning she was strangely gloomy and taciturn. Even the kitchen cuckoo clock outtalked her for the first hour. But she was bursting with her story, and it finally came out. The nice-looking young woman next door to Mrs. Gadder's had cruelly disappointed her. The elopers had returned and utterly ruined a

perfectly lovely scandal—burned it, one might say, at both ends, for Mrs. Gadder's beginning and Mr. Gadder's conclusions were both wrong. It was her own husband, after all, that the nice-looking young woman had gone away with, and it was her brother, not a "cruelty-officer," who had come and taken care of the children. The young couple, it appeared, had long planned to celebrate their tenth wedding anniversary by repeating their wedding trip, but the husband's business engagements interfered and they had about given up the notion. Then at the last minute he had found it could be done, if she would join him as his train passed through, and so it was arranged by long distance telephone.

From Maddy's interminable story it was clear that the affair was a miserable failure, also, from the point of view of the principals. The man's business cares pursued him and the young mother worried about the children; so they hurried home before the week was out.

It was this story that put a silly idea into the head of the sentimental Super. His own and

the General Manager's twenty-fifth anniversary was then only about a year away.

"Why," said he, "should we not attempt an exact duplication of our wedding journey? It wasn't a long or a pretentious trip, and it should be easy to repeat it. The older children can take care of the younger ones, and so there need be no worry on that score. Suppose we set about planning it, eh?"

Warming to the idea, he made a fine castle in Spain of it, and the General Manager nodded approvingly. But the G. M., as has been said, is an accomplished actress. She did not seem greatly disappointed next day, when, after making sundry inquiries, the sentimentalist was obliged to admit that the thing couldn't be; that, unlike Mr. Browning's wise thrush who "sings each song twice over," they "never could recapture the first fine careless rapture." It was not that they were grown old—oh, certainly not! —but that the world was grown new. The stations of their first pilgrimage had been wiped out. The old Eagle Hotel at Bethlehem, whose

register was the first to record them as "Mr. and Mrs.," had been trampled down in the march of progress; so, too, had the pleasant English inn at Toronto. And worse still, the idyllic farmhouse in the Pocono region had passed into other hands and had degenerated into a crowded boarding-house, largely patronized by Gotham-Americans who went there to rest "out of the hoily-boily" and call for "burled eggs."

Besides, the quaint old stage-coach, which had carried them out from Stroudsburg twenty-five years before and dropped them and their little luggage at the farmhouse lane, much like romantic characters out of a Jane Austen book, had long since made way for a comic steam-demon, which wobbled and snorted through the valley, perhaps twice or thrice a day, and murdered the quiet of those hills with its piping whistle.

Eheu! it was sad to have to admit it, but they had waited too long; though, of course, it was not their fault but the world's, which no longer was young and unhurried and romantic. Well,

then, how should they celebrate? Could they not have a sure-enough Silver Wedding, a really elaborate one, an affair of many guests (and gifts) but with little outlay to themselves? They certainly needed silver of every description. But to whom should they look to supply it? If they had only been in politics, or in business in a big way, the hold-up might have been easy and highly profitable. But they had no such associations and their few personal acquaintances were nearly all as poor as themselves. Their only rich relatives, distant enough when they were married—they had sent their best wishes on that occasion—had increased both their wealth and their distance in the passing years.

So there was no hope from that quarter. There seemed to be, in fact, no hope from any quarter. How do men contrive these elaborate Silver Weddings we read about so often, anyway? If it were not for the promise made in the foreword of this history that there would be no political discussion between these covers, some-

thing might be said here in favor of a bonus for marital (as well as martial) veterans. It does seem that the Government should do something handsome for every man and woman who remains married (to each other) for twenty-five years.

The Super suggested a number of wild schemes which were frowned upon or patiently ignored by the General Manager; and, of course, nothing came of any of them. As the day approached their expectations and their hopes became exceedingly modest. The Wedding Day in '96 had been one of the grayest and coldest fragments of June the Weather Bureau had any record of. "Blessed is the bride the sun shines on." They prayed that their silver anniversary might afford them at least a few shreds of golden sunlight. They planned nothing more ambitious than a quiet excursion to the Park to listen to the music, and all they asked was the bright sun in a blue sky.

They got it.

The incandescent ball fairly boiled over the

world's eastern rim that morning. It rose, steaming, to the zenith. It blazed down the afternoon, and shot its last, level ray at them, balefully, as from a red-hot eye. It was the most terrifically sizzling day of all that summer. Venturing abroad in such heat was quite out of the question. There was nothing to do but sit at home, with palm-leaf fans, and keep out of each other's way. One of the juniors—Fred—who had been lack-luster for several days was too languid to stir out of his bed, and the General Manager put in much of her time supplying him with cooling drinks.

Under all these circumstances it was just as well that the dreams of the journey or the elaborate reception had gone glimmering. Caterers, cooks and congratulators would have been a catastrophe. No perspiring postmen or tradesmen's delivery wagons left messages or gifts at the door—oh, yes, there was one silvern remembrance, and it came from frigid Boston, of all places. A kindly, warm-hearted Celt in that city had sent, several days before, a handsome,

sizable pitcher of quadruple plate. In this, toward late afternoon, lemonade was brewed for the refreshment of the one neighbor who came to call; not with any notion of honoring the anniversary, for he was in utter ignorance of the event, but merely to gossip. And the news he brought was heart-breaking.

He had just come from an auction sale, he said, at Dullman's house, only a few doors around the corner. (Of course everybody had heard of poor Dullman's troubles. Only a month before that his wife had run off with a handsomer man.) Yes, the poor fellow had suddenly decided to run away from everything himself, and so the handsome furnishings of his home were sacrificed. Everything went for a song. "Silver? [thus the neighborhood gossip] Yes, lots of it. There were two or three of those large platters you were talking about some time ago, and any quantity of other things, almost as good as new—eh? Oh, yes, to be sure, everything was marked with a 'D'— Why so it is! I never thought of that. Well, well, I might

have sent word around to you, but I thought you knew all about it."

After all what was there to do, but make merry over it?

"Oh, by the way," the visitor said, some time later, "I almost forgot what brought me here. Miss Blank was at our house last night and she asked me to give you this package; something she said you asked her a long time ago to get for you."

The General Manager opened the package—aluminum hairpins, to match her silver hair!

"I think," said the Super, after the tea things had been put away, "I'll write a letter to Boston something like this: 'Dear Charlie—Thanks for that beautiful pitcher. When I tell you it was the finest gift we got, you will realize what a perfectly terrible day we have had—' "

"You dare!" said the G. M., looking daggers.

In the early evening Dr. Wiggins came to have a look at Fred, who had developed a slight fever. The good man's face was grave when he came out of the sick-room. He called the par-

ents into consultation. It was Scarlet Fever, he said, and there was nothing for it but to send the poor lad to the Municipal Hospital. The disease was epidemic; there wasn't a capable nurse at liberty in all Germantown; and there were the other children to be considered—altogether it was the only thing to do.

So, late that night, white-robed ambulance men came and carried away the darling of that brave woman's heart. She was not even permitted to kiss him "good-by," but, smiling encouragement upon him, she watched until he was lifted into the ambulance and borne away.

Thus ended the day of the Silver-Plated Wedding, and the night was full of tears and prayerful petitions.

. . . . .

Twenty-five years of sunshine and clouds, of heats and snows, and still no sign of peace and ease and quiet comfort!

Upon a frosty evening of early fall—it was last October, to be exact—the Super sat before

the fire-place, in the living room which looks out upon Wister Woods, smoking his pipe and musing upon his many failures. After a quarter century of frivolous shiftlessness he had to his credit, he told himself, but little more in tangible assets than the cash capital with which he had started. To be sure there was the equity in the house, but that must presently be mortgaged to meet increasing family expenses and to pay off some long over-due accounts—Frank Kelly, the proficient and patient painter, had been waiting an unconscionable time for his money for the last new dress the house had put on. Spend, spend, spend! the Super sighed; and what had he to show for it?

Fred, in a dim, far corner of the room, was softly fingering upon the piano a prelude of Debussy. This tall, studious lad of fifteen, who was Brenda's playmate only ten years ago, is music-mad. He wants a 'cello now—more expense! Usually his elder brothers cry out against his incessant music, but to-night there

is peace. John, the ex-Marine, who now hopes to be a great painter, or something, calls down from his crude studio up under the roof: "Encore! fine! hold it!"

Herself slips into a seat beside the boy at the piano and adjusts her glasses. Together they attack a difficult duet—Debussy's "Iberia," thinks the Super, who is never sure about such things. It is very pleasant, at any rate, to sit there watching alternately the earnest and capable players, the leaping gold in the fire-place, the silver scattered by the full moon over the woods beyond the wide windows.

Suddenly Mike barks in the hall below. There is a rush of feet and a babel of noisy greetings. Leonard is home for the week-end. There is an end of quiet ease in the living-room. Lights flash up, and all the inmates of the house gather about the piano for an hour of rough-house with Gilbert and Sullivan and Victor Herbert. With Herself as accompanist, they give themselves up heartily to a rollicking chorus from "Pinafore."

Some of the voices are quite creditable; a good lyric tenor, a rich mezzo-soprano and two passable baritones.

The Super takes down from the mantel-shelf a little book he had been browsing through earlier in the evening—Lord Bacon's thoughtful essays. He turns to a passage that had seemed to him the quintessence of wisdom: "He that hath a wife and children hath given hostages to fortune, for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief."

The Super smiled to himself, and the leaping flames in the fireplace chuckled back at him, encouragingly. ("We, who are about to die, salute thee.") Bacon may have been right about that "hostage stuff"; but what is Fortune? What says the Book of Books about it? Nothing. In no Bible concordance is there any mention of Fortune, but there is much talk of Talents. And what greater enterprise could there be than to be concerned in the making of two (perhaps three, or four, or even more) talents to grow where there was only one (possibly none) be-

fore? The Super smiled to himself again, laid Lord Bacon aside and took up his pen.

"That old-timer," said he, "was reputed wise in his generation, but perhaps I am happier in mine."

The General Manager, stopping the riot at the piano for a moment, called to him: "Surely you're not trying to write anything? I thought you were through with all that scribbling about 'Herself and the Houseful'."

"Oh, just a word more," said the Super.

CHAPTER X

The Super Has the Last Word

Bottom—"Will it please you to see the Epilogue?"
—Midsummer-Night's Dream.

For some time, while this homely tale was stumbling through these pages, I have been conscious of sly nods and becks, of pursed lips and elevated eyebrows, of tchicking tongues and whisperings—and even, occasionally, of words of dissent plainly and openly spoken. More than once it has seemed to me that my audience was behaving as did the Duke and his guests during

the performance of that other "tedious brief scene of very tragical mirth;" and like that other weaver, earnest Bottom, I have been tempted to step out of character into my proper personal pronoun. . . .

Poor, simple Bottom! I have always had a warm fellow-feeling for that gentle half-wit, who bore so gallantly the scornful arrows of Duke—dear me! what was the Duke's name? Forgotten! And the Duke's noble guests; what were their names? Forgotten, too! Strange that we remember only the great mooncalf, Bottom; and Thisbe, his "beauteous lady"—but that draws me back to what I had started to say.

I have been conscious, I say, of signs and sounds of disapproval in my audience, and so I take off my actor's mask to harangue the stalls—or, if it be so, bare benches.

I cannot expect all to believe, as I do, that this little play was worth the acting, that the story of the heroine's devotion to duty, of her real triumphs in the face of great difficulties, of

her high patriotism, should be as interesting to an American audience, and as great an inspiration to others, as the accomplishments of some of her more famous sisters in the life of the nation. But there was one whisper from beyond the footlights to which I must make rejoinder.

There was a voice (I'm sure I heard it) which intimated that the heroine is not in fact a "beauteous lady" at all, that she could not possibly have retained through all these years her youthful grace of face and form and her crystal spirit.

That libel must have been uttered by some graceless young popinjay who is not now, and probably never will be, able to pass judgment upon true beauty in womanhood. I call upon all men who have been mated to one woman for twenty-five years (or who hope to be) to bear me witness. My heroine, if they will read between the lines, is but the type, the symbol of their own. Let such men only, then, attend to this, my peroration and my affidavit:

You, my fellow dotards, have been conscious —as I am now—of the sidelong glance and the

scornful, up-lifted eyebrow of the scoffer, who doubts your sincerity when you admit your debt, and proclaim your loyalty, to one woman. This contemner of you is usually the masterful man, inordinately proud of his self-dependence, his wealth, his worldly wisdom, who tells you—if he notices you at all—that one who talks as you do is either a liar or a fool. Out upon him! He is himself one of those things, or both—and in his heart he knows it. If he should go so far as to call you uxorious, look up that epithet in the dictionary—if you are not sure of its meaning—and be proud of it. Ten to one you have been guilty of worse things than that—and so has he. And, Heaven help me! so have I. Though we swagger, as he does, in the market place, let us put off all pretense here.

This living-room in which I now sit solitary—Herself and the Houseful have long since gone to bed—looks out upon a woodland space, still and silvery in the moonlight; an ancient, almost primeval, prospect. Yet here above my writing-

desk is a small bulb of modern invention, which —at a touch, when the scribbing itch is upon me—will drown this nook of the room in artificial light and utterly blot out the fairyland beyond this casement.

Smoldering logs in a fireplace bring many pictures to the meditative watcher, but a living wood steadily ablaze with moonlight is better. It affords wider, deeper and more vivid vistas to the average imagination. It is easy to fancy, for instance, that those are rain-sweet apple-blossoms of Love's first remembered Spring on that nearest tree in the middle distance, and that You and She, loitering beneath those blossomy boughs, are still perennially fresh and young as they. Why not? A man is as old as he feels and *THE* woman is as old as she looks—to him. At any rate, you will not admit Her to have aged at all—not in moonlight, surely. You will deny all wrinkles and other marks of cold Time. . . .

I never look out, on moonlight nights, upon

these woods beyond our postern gate without making a special obeisance, toward a dim hollow, encircled by tall tulip-poplars, which I have always associated with Herself. It represents, for me, that dark valley into whose shadow, unaccompanied and unafraid, she has descended on eight occasions and returned triumphantly with a new olive branch. Yes, and with new luster of physical and spiritual beauty. Her progressive perfection has amazed and abashed me, who have contributed so little, comparatively, to the success of this establishment. It is she who has been the constant care-taker of those olive branches ("As the twig is bent the tree's inclined."); and the inclinations of all of them, now grown into such sturdy young trees, have been of her bending, not mine. The virtues they have they got from her. I am under no delusion as to the origin of their faults, but—knowing what I know—it is surprising that they have so few.

These are some of the truths that come to

mingle with my gratitude to the Giver of All Good for many blessings little deserved. These moonlight meditations are good medicine for my soul—but let us turn on the electric switch and come back into the living-room. . . . Here, too, my shortcomings pursue me. The furniture cries out to me to be renewed; the bare walls shriek for pictures (perhaps John will supply them some day); Fred hungers for a Steinway, and he may have to depend upon his own genius to appease that hunger. Well, this room is the heart of the home, but it affords no stage upon which I may play the braggart.

I remind myself again of Bottom, the Weaver. You who are familiar with the comedy will recall the first rehearsal of the play-within-the-play to be presented before the Duke and his guests:

BOTTOM—Let me play the lion too. I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the Duke say, "Let him roar again, let him roar again."

QUINCE—An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

ALL—That would hang us, every mother's son.

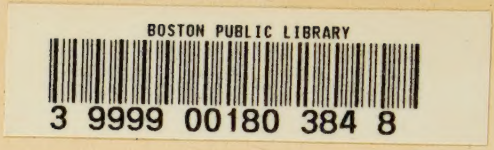
BOTTOM—I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us; but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any suckling dove; I will roar you as 'twere any nightingale.

I know my place. It is to "aggravate" my voice and play the nightingale here, in this living-room:

This is a Queen's domain,
And all her subjects, happy in her reign,
Pray God she may, with her sweet woman's grace,
Long bless this place.
This is her court. The little airs that stir
About the room are eloquent of her.
Each senseless thing whereon her hand hath lain
Becomes in its own way a courtier.
This is a Queen's domain!

This is a holy spot.
Ah! pity for the man who knows it not!
But peace and holy calm, the light o' life
Knows nothing of,

The Queen's mate hath, when in the quiet night
He broods alone beside his ingle's light.
He knows, when all his heart burns pure and hot
With thoughts too sweet to speak aloud or write,
This is a holy spot!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